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***SRI BHAGWAT-DHARMA MISSION SERIES***

SRI SWAMI NARAYANA

A GOSPEL OF BHAGWAT-DHARMA

*or*

GOD IN REDEMPTIVE ACTION



# SRI SWAMI NARAYANA

( A GOSPEL OF BHAGWAT-DHARMA

or

GOD IN REDEMPTIVE ACTION )

BY

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*Presented to — Dr Mahendrapati Sircar.  
by Lalchanker M. Jami M. A. Ph.D.  
No. 1, Central Avenue (South)  
Calcutta.  
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To  
THE SACRED MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER  
WHO HARMONIZED IN HIS LIFE  
THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF JAINISM CULMINATING IN AHIMSA  
WITH THE BHAKTI OF THE BHAGWAT DHARMA:  
AND WHO UPHELD ME WITH THE ARMS OF HIS LOVE  
IN MANY VICISSITUDES OF MY LIFE AND FAITH,  
MANIFESTING THUS A UNIQUE FATHERLY LOVE;  
AND TO  
ALL MEN AND WOMEN  
OF WHATEVER COUNTRY, RACE AND CREED,  
WHO SEEK TO KNOW THE INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES  
OF  
GOD'S REDEEMING LOVE.





## PREFACE

There are times in the history of nations when the Spirit of God worketh in a special manner for the moral and spiritual regeneration of society. This is true of Hindustan perhaps to a larger extent than in the case of any other country, for, here, from the time of the Vedas down to the present day—a period extending over not less than five thousand years—God has worked continuously through a succession of Prophets and Teachers and great religious movements, and has thus made the spiritual life of the people as rich and varied as it could be. This is true of New India as of any unit in Indian history, and the rise of men like Rajarshi Ram Mohan Roy, Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen, Paramhansa Ram Krishna, Swami Dayananda Saraswati and others, together with the movements which these men founded or led, is an eloquent testimony to this working of the spirit.

The most remarkable among the modern Teachers in India, however, is Swami Narayana, the subject of the present work. He was a contemporary of Ram Mohan Roy. Younger than the latter by about eight or nine years, he passed away three years earlier. Thus his life was lived just in the times which have been rightly considered a very critical period in the history of India. In all probability the country then had been reduced to one of the lowest points in her life and civilization. The conquest of a country of

such vast proportions as have rightly earned for it the name "sub-continent" by a mere handful of people, whose homes were six thousand miles away and who, moreover, were here for the purpose of trade, is the true index of the chaotic condition of the land. This becomes all the more significant when we remember that India was conquered by the local agents of the British East India Company against the expressed and emphatic wishes of their masters in England.

The chaos that prevailed in India at that time was not merely political; rather the political conditions were a reflection of the social and the religious life of the people. If anything, the people of the country were divided even more in the social and religious sphere of life than in the political. Even this division of the country into different religions, sects, castes, states and principalities, bad as it was, was not perhaps the worst evil from which the land suffered. Darkness, intellectual, moral and spiritual prevailed all over the land, and such customs as the Suttee, Infanticide, Kuleenism etc. and gross superstition and immoral practices in the name of religion as in Vama-Marga (the left-handed Shakti Panth) were but too common.

It was against such a background as this that both Rajarshi Ram Mohan Roy and Sri Swami Narayana lived and worked, one in the East and the other in the West of India. Even in this there was a difference, for while Ram Mohan Roy worked in the midst of the stable conditions of life that prevailed in Bengal

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in his times owing to the Company's rule and in the full blaze of the light from the West that was available then in Calcutta, Swami Narayana did all his work in a part of the country where the British rule came to be established only in the last years of his ministry. Thus Ram Mohan had all the advantages which a reformer could have from a stable and enlightened administration together with the new light that came from the West. In sharp contrast to this Swami Narayana worked in the midst of conditions which were wholly medieval. The Province of Gujrat which was his sphere of work has even to-day nearly three hundred states and principalities, which are about half the number of those in the entire country. All these were in existence then and there was no suzerain power worth the name to hold their warring and rapacious instincts in check. His work lay in the midst of these, and though he met with serious opposition from some of them and from different religious bodies, not only was there no abatement of his zeal and activity, but on the contrary he helped much in restoring order and peace in the country. Thus he lived and worked in what may be called the last days of Medieval India. It is on this account that he has been called by such a discerning critic and judge as the late Mahadeva Govinda Ranade "the last of the Hindu Reformers".

One should qualify, however, this description by adding to it the words "of the old type". This is undoubtedly what Ranade meant, for he has paid his tribute again and again in unmistakable terms to such

men as Ram Mohan, Keshub, Dayananda etc., as Reformers of Hinduism, and Ranade himself was one of them. But the difference between all these and Swami Narayana lies in the fact that while they were influenced in one way or another by whatever light came from the Western World, he was wholly untouched by any alien influence and was as purely Hindu in his mental and spiritual constitution as any in the long roll of Teachers and Reformers of the past. This constitutes his uniqueness among the reformers of our times, for in him we see Hinduism in its purest and most indigenous form.

This is not all. We find in him one of the noblest examples of the efflorescence of the Hindu genius and spirit. It would seem as if the best in Ancient and Medieval Hinduism had been summed up in him in a classical form just at that moment when the old order was passing away for ever. Indeed so remarkable are the life and work of Swami Narayana that it is no exaggeration to say that these constitute a very important chapter not only in the religious life of India, but in the history of Religion in general. In him Hinduism approximates to the Perfect Form of Religion as in few others, and his life, work and the movement he led have few parallels in the entire range of history.

It is because of this that his followers have thought of him as a Prophet or an Incarnation, or rather the Supreme Incarnation. Whereas the outer

reported to have been performed by Swami Nārāyana, and to stories concerning his birth etc. As far as possible he has given these as he has found them in the literature of the movement, and added his comments occasionally for or against them only when he was sure of his ground. In his eyes the fact that such things as have been written in this book and many more could be believed in is in itself a great and singular phenomenon, especially when it is coupled with the remarkable results Swami Narayana achieved in the moral and spiritual lives of hundreds and thousands of his disciples.

In addition to his belief that the Supernatural reveals itself in a miraculous manner as well as in the moral and spiritual conversion of people, the author was led to make room for some of these stories in the book for another reason. While talking over the matter with Dr. Rudolf Otto, the celebrated German theologian and author of such well-known books as *The Idea of the Holy*, *Mysticism: East and West* etc, the suggestion was made by Dr. Otto that such things should be told in order that they may help the comparative study of beliefs held by different religious bodies. It is, however, neither in a sense of rivalry with any particular faith, nor with a view to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of scholars that the present book is written. The aim of the author in writing it is to let the world know that God has done such marvellous things in our midst in recent times, and thereby to deepen the faith of mankind in the redemptive work of God.

There is a deep universal appeal in the story of the life and work of Swami Narayana. This was the case in his own life-time, and the Hindus, Moslems and even the few Englishmen who came to know about him felt and testified to the spiritual power of the great Teacher. The present author has spoken a few times about him to different people and groups, and he has been almost invariably surprised at the impression made on their minds. An English Missionary from Oxford, after hearing only a few things concerning Swami Narayana, said that he had neither read nor heard of such things anywhere else. An American lady, the Vice-President of a very important college in which Christian Missionaries and workers are trained, after reading just a little of the MS. of the present work, said that it was impossible to believe that the people of whom the book treated had not known God. Such testimonies could be multiplied, but it is not necessary to do so.

In the writing of the book we have freely used all the Literature of the fellowship of Swami Narayana, and for this we are deeply indebted to all the authors, past and present. If we have not mentioned any names while quoting from some of the authors, it is largely because most of the stories related in the book are found in several authors, and thus belong to the common fund of the fellowship's tradition. We have given in the Appendix a book written under the personal supervision of Swami Narayana to give some idea of his Teaching. In re-writing it into

world saw in him a Reformer of religious and social abuses, his disciples with true intuition saw that he manifested and revealed God to them. In this they were right, for primarily Swami Narayana was a Prophet and only incidentally a Reformer. While remaining strictly orthodox, his followers have given him a position which has been denied even to such men as Shankar, Ramanuja, or Chaitanya. Corresponding to this there is in him a spiritual quality which awakens in one a sense of supernaturalism to a larger extent than in the case of any other Hindu or Roman Catholic saint. For proper parallels to Swami Narayana in this matter as well as in spiritual dynamics and ethical vitality and purity, one has to go to the original founders of the great religions of the world. Among these latter it is the life and work of Jesus Christ that offer a most striking resemblance to those of Swami Narayana. To this fact the attention of the present writer was drawn more than twenty years ago, and in 1918 he wrote to that effect in a pamphlet. His further studies in the literature of the movement led by Swami Narayana have only confirmed him in this early impression of his.

This close parallel between the life and work of Jesus Christ and of Swami Narayana is all the more remarkable because of the fact that there is no borrowing or imitation on the part of the latter. Neither Swami Narayana nor his immediate disciples had any idea of the Christian Gospels or any other Christian literature, and it is doubtful if they were even aware



of the existence of such. Because of this, this resemblance can be explained only on the ground that the same Divine Spirit has thought it proper to work in a similar manner in two such widely different settings and periods. This is a matter for thankful rejoicing rather than for cavilling, and it is in such a spirit that the present work is offered to all lovers of true Religion and God as affording a glimpse in a very remarkable chapter of religious history.

To the author the book is a study in the redemptive work of God, in the Revelation, Manifestation and even the Incarnation of God which is known in India by the name *Bhagwat Dharma*. He can say this all the more freely since he is neither a professed believer in Swami Narayana nor a member of his Church.

In writing the book the author has aimed "to give a faithful picture of Swami Narayana, not only as he was but as he came to be believed in his own life-time and later. For one thing, in a life like that of Swami Narayana it is very difficult to decide what is strictly "historical" and what is superimposed on it by the faith of his followers. It is impossible to do this unless one starts with a presupposition that rules out all the miraculous or the supernatural element from life. The author might confess here, however, that he does believe in the possibility of miracles in general, although he may not be in a position to vouch for any in particular. It is because of this that he has given a place in the book to a few of the miracles

English, we have referred to a translation of the same made many years ago by the late Sir Monier Williams, another anonymous translation and one made recently by Mr. K. J. Parekh.

We have also much pleasure in acknowledging our debt of gratitude to K. S. Arjunsinghjee, a devoted follower of Swami Narayana for his interest in the present work, the publication of which would have been difficult without a loan advanced very kindly by him. We must also express our thanks to R. B. Diwan Tarachand Showikram of Hyderabad, Sindh, a worthy brother of the celebrated Sadhus Navalrai and Hiranand for his kindness in giving a donation towards the publication of the book. Besides, we express our thanks to the different friends who have shown their interest and sympathy in the writing of the book. Among these two names must be especially mentioned viz., Mr. Tribhovan G. Vyas and Mr. K. J. Parekh, both of whom have evinced much interest in the work and have been of help in various ways to the author.

The proprietors of the press deserve our thanks for their giving us much help in the matter of reading the proofs, for their neat and careful printing and for their promptitude in finishing the work in time, all of which are hard to find in a mofussil place like Rajkot.

*1 January, 1936*  
Harmony House  
Rajkot

**Manilal C. Parekh**



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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Family and Early Training**

In the northern part of what is called Kaushaladesha, there is a place called Itar, where lived a Brahmin family of Sarvaria sub-caste. The family was Samvedi, Savarna Gotri and of the Kauthumi branch : it followed the priestly profession which has been the age-long vocation of the Brahmins, and bore the surname of Pande. The religion of the family was Vaishnavism, i. e. the worship of Vishnu, and looking to the names that were given to the boys it seems that both Rama and Krishna had an equal share of this worship as the Incarnations of Vishnu. Hari-prasad, the father of Swami Narayana, came in due course of time to be married to a girl whose family lived in Chappaiya, about ten miles from Ayodhya. Owing to straightened circumstances some time after his marriage, Hariprasad left his home and settled in Chappaiya. It was here that there were born in due course to this couple three sons Rama Pratapa, Ghan-shyama and Ichharama. It is the second of these who is the subject of the present biography. He was born at 10:00 P. M. on the ninth night of the bright half of the month Chaitra, the day known as Ram-naumi, i. e. the birthday of Rama in the year Vikrama Samvat 1837, corresponding to the year 1781 A. D.

In the Sampradayic literature both the Conception and the Birth are made occasions of great festivities

on the part of the parents as well as that of gods in the highest heaven. Many and beautiful are the praises of the Divine Child that are sung at this time both by men and gods, and the poets and writers of the Satsang have vied with one another in making this occasion a centre of divine and human festivities. This is not all. There was a corresponding depression and pain in the world of evil spirits, and on the sixth day one of the foremost of these sent his agents to destroy the Babe. Needless to say, all these efforts were vain, and the Babe grew night and day in body and spirit.

The necessity of this birth has been thus described in the Sampradayic literature, a description which is based on the story of Uddhava as given in Shrimad Bhagwata\* :—

When the Earth suffered heavily in the 28th century of Dwapar Yuga, she went to complain to Indra and Brahma for release from sinful people, and they all went to God Himself who, in response to this request, came as Krishna to destroy the wicked and to re-establish the Dharma. With him came Baldeva and Arjuna also. When the time for Krishna came to return home, he thought of destroying the Jadavs, his own clan, as they had grown wicked and intolerable. He thought, however, that he should also give his knowledge to some one well-fitted to receive it, so that thereby real Dharma might be re-established. He could think only of Uddhava as the person fitted to do this and so he wanted to keep him on earth for this purpose. He then taught him his doctrine, which forms the eleventh chapter of the Bhagwata, and he asked him to go and stay with Badrish. He also gave him

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\* This is one of the chief scriptural books of the Vaishnavas.

his wooden sandals, established him as the Acharya of the new doctrine and returned home, while Uddhava went to Badrikashram.\* The latter taught the doctrine to many while there, and also taught it to many in Aryavarta coming down on the plains for the purpose.

It was after 4,700 years of Kali Yuga had passed that the Earth became again heavily encumbered with sin, so she went again to some of the Munis such as Marichi etc., and to Indra, Brahma and Vasudeva. They all asked her to go to Narayana in Badrikashram where both the brothers Narayana and Nara lived. They were deeply engrossed in meditation when she came to them. She cried before them and complained of her troubles, praying to them to come to her rescue. There came also a large number of Munis and also Dharma and Bhakti. All these were in deep trouble, and they confirmed what the Earth had said. While they were discussing this matter, there came Durvasa from Mt. Kailash, and as no one took notice of him, he, in accordance with his nature, became furious and cursed them all that they should be born upon Earth and while there suffer insult similar to what they had given him. The company explained to him why they had not given him a proper welcome, whereupon he said that Badrish would find some way to ward off the evil of his curse. Narayana then went into meditation and the Supreme Deity told him that He had already thought of incarnating Himself for the rescue of the Earth, and that the curse of the Rishi was only an excuse. He also said that He had come before in many Incarnations, but as the need was never so great as now He would come in His fullness. Narayana on coming out from his meditation told what he had heard from the Almighty. He also asked all of them to be incarnated as human beings. Dharma, and

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\*This is a place on the Himalayas.



Bhakti were to be the parents of the coming Incarnation, and the others were to be His aids. Among these Uddhava was to go first and spread the doctrine and herald the coming of the Deity.

The child which was born in this way is said to have performed many miracles as it grew up, and quite a big-sized book records only these which remind one of the stories told of Krishna in his younger days, and of Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels. These miracles, it is interesting to find, are very different from those which Swami Narayana is said to have performed when he grew up and became the head of the movement.

The family removed from Chappaiya to Ayodhya where their circumstances improved, and some attention was paid to the education of the boys. It was in his eighth year that Ghanshyama was invested with the sacred thread, which was the symbol of his entrance into religious life. Within about a year after this, his mother passed away, and about six months after her death the father passed away also. It is quite likely that these two events following one upon another so quickly made a deep impression on the sensitive mind of Ghanshyama and he left home on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Ashada in the year Samvat 1849,\* when he was "eleven years, three months and one day" old.

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\*The reckoning of the new year according to this era begins with the second day of the bright half of the month of Ashada. It is not so in all parts of India, however, for even where the same era is prevalent, there are two ways of reckoning the year followed.

During these years at home, the mind of Ghan-shyama seems to have been attracted towards religion from his early boyhood. He was fond of hearing religious stories which is such a common feature of Hindu religious life, kept vows such as boys do, and used to frequent temples for worship etc. He lived in that part of India which has been hallowed by some of the most sacred memories for centuries, it being the very home of Sri Rama Chandra, and has been visited at all times by bands of ascetics and pilgrims as a place of pilgrimage. The neighbourhood is thus eminently fitted to awaken and confirm the religious consciousness in any sensitive mind, and it undoubtedly exercised a great influence on the tender spirit of Ghanshyama. It is said that his father had noticed this tendency in him, and had asked his eldest son, Rama Pratapa, to take special care of him. It is possible that the death of his parents hastened the crisis, or that being very sensitive he found it unbearable to live in a house where he had experienced so much affection, or that one of the many bodies of wandering ascetics spirited him away from home. It is said that one of his companions carried a complaint, probably of some innocent mischief, to his brother, and he left home under cover of night. Whatever it be, he did this in such a thorough manner that no trace of him was found for a full generation until he, in advanced middle age and with his great position well established in a different and far-off part of India, sent for his family.

## CHAPTER II

### Apprenticeship

For seven years he moved about the country as a young Sadhu, moving in many a group and visiting many a place of pilgrimage alone or with others. A detailed account of all these wanderings and pilgrimages is given in the various biographies that exist, and undoubtedly a good deal of legendary matter is mixed up with it. But the main features of his experiences and activities during these years can be traced and some episodes of his life during this period might be given to show what moral and spiritual qualities he was possessed of in these early days. Evidently he had two objects in view, viz., to go all over Bharatkhanda as it was known in those days so that he might visit all the important places of pilgrimage, and to find a true Guru i. e. Teacher for himself.

It is singular that out of half a dozen great men of Modern India, no less than three, viz., Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahma Samaj, Dayanand Sarasvati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, and Swami Sahajananda, the subject of the present biography, left home at an early stage in their lives, and thus trained themselves in the school of spiritual vagrancy as it might well be called for the great and wonderful work they did in their after-life. It is also worthy of note that the greatest woman of New Hindustan, viz., Pundita Rama Bai had her first training in a similar

manner. This is a significant fact, and testifies alike to the deeply spiritual character of the country as well as to the remarkable daring and initiative, especially in the sphere of religion, that must have existed two or three generations back even in the very young people.\*

It is singular that these persons mentioned here came out from all this not only unscathed but as finished masterpieces of God's handiwork. They did this because they were primarily unsoilable, and because they always found some individuals or small groups of people who like salt saved this world of wandering ascetics from becoming an underworld of tramps, and who were always ready to lead the right kind of seekers or aspirants to higher paths. This has been the peculiar glory of India since long before the time of Gautama Buddha, a glory which has never failed the country all these centuries.

As for Ghanshyama, all the accounts relating to this period say that he wended his way to the Hima-

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\*The following words of Dr. Macnicol in reference to Pundita Ramabai in his well-written biography of hers, hold true in all these cases and many more:—

"This is one of the most amazing aspects of Ramabai's whole history—her emergence unscathed from these long years of life as what in other lands would be called a tramp, a beggar,—though she never begged—but in India is called a pilgrim. She passes through poverty and the worst ills of life, through a furnace of trial, and comes out with no smell of fire upon her. She comes forth a graduate in Life, in its wisdom and calm judgement. *Perhaps such a thing is possible only in India.*" (The italics are of the present author.)

layas in the North. The lure of these wonderful mountains has been great to the Hindu spirit ever since the dawn of its spiritual culture, and it is no wonder if this boy who had lived all these years not very far from these Hills should be drawn towards them. This attraction need not always be spiritual; it is also of the Unknown and the Marvellous as we now know but too well from the expeditions that are made every year to Mount Everest etc. by men and even women at great risk to their life. The Himalayas are a world in themselves, a world entirely different from the plains which are very often bare and monotonous. Although this great range is included in the map of India and is considered to belong to Hindustan—a fact which is true both geographically and spiritually—it is a world in itself. These mountains form a world in themselves of beauty, wonder, majesty and glory. It is no wonder that the popular and the poetic mind of India has invested them with the habitation of gods and goddesses, Yogis, Rishis and Munis. Everything on them soothes the body, mind and spirit. The cool delicious air of these high altitudes is not less cooling and refreshing to the heated bodies of people than is the general atmosphere of beauty and rest pervading them to the troubled minds of people who go there. To-day these Hills have been brought too close to us by railways, buses, motors and other vehicles of modern make, and so they have lost for many their spiritual charm and beauty. But it was not so a century ago,

and gods and goddesses peopled these parts from which they would seem to have retired now.

For Ghanshyama who was actuated by a spiritual quest from the start, to move on these Hills was an education in itself. These mountains have been the abode of eternal snows which are the greatest symbol on earth of God's holiness, and like magnets they have attracted from the plains people seeking the life of the Spirit. Here Ghanshyama is sure to have met some of these people-Yogis-whose one object in life is to have constant communion with God.

He is said to have gone to Naimisharanya and stayed there four days; to Shripur, Haridwar, Gupta-Ganga, Jyotirmath and to Badri-Kedar. These are all places of pilgrimage, and there is a constant flow of pilgrims about them.

In the Sampradayaic literature it was in this last named place that there came to him Badrinath himself offering him worship, and foretelling him what he was going to do later on. Badrinath prayed him to install him later on in Gujrat so that he may be more amenable to people. There came to him the four Yugas in the forms of a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Shudra, these representing Satya-Yuga, Treta-Yuga, Dwapar-Yuga and Kali-Yuga respectively. The first three of these were in trouble because the righteousness belonging to each of them viz, asceticism and meditation of the first, sacrifices of the second, worship in the temples etc. of the

third, was at a low ebb, and they prayed that their Dharma should be re-established. Then came Kali-Yuga complaining that because of this he would have no place to go to. whereupon he was told that wherever people would not follow the new Faith, he would have room to work his lawlessness. Disunion and Quarrelsomeness were his two sons, and they both went to various sects and people who did not act according to real *Dharma*.

After some further wandering he came to Pulhashram where he offered worship to Muktanath, and took a vow to live an ascetic life. This he is said to have done to fulfill the promise he gave to Satya-Yuga. He is said to have met during these days a troop of Hath-Yogis whom he taught the higher way of Raja-Yoga. He next went to Nepal where he was pained to see the religious life of the people far from satisfactory. Even to-day it is a land of dark superstition, and it was much more so in those days.

He then came to a place called Butol where he stayed for some time. Leaving this place he entered a huge forest, where after wandering for some days he found a man called Gopala-Yogi. This man seems to have been a real Yogi, and it is likely that Ghanshyama lived with him and learned from him some lessons in Yoga. He gave to the latter a small MS. which he carried with him in his later wanderings as a most cherished possession, brought it with him to Loj, and gave it to Swami Muktananda who in

his turn gave it to Raghuvirjee. This is preserved in Vartal. It contains a summary of the Gita written in Ghanshyama's own hand, and may very well represent the teaching given to him by Gopala Yogi. He had found something here in which his spirit could establish itself, and it is interesting to find that this was nothing less than the Bhagwad-Gita itself. Thus at this early stage of his wanderings, he met a Yogi and was led to the Gita which contains in itself the quintessence of Hinduism. It may be said that he had already found his spiritual home. It is remarkable that so soon after leaving home in this lonely manner, and without any definite guidance to start with, he should have landed on such a safe harbour as what the combination of these two meant, a fact which testifies at once to his genuine quest and also to the divine guidance that was with him thus from the beginning. Of these, Yoga presupposes even in its early stages a faith and belief in God as a Personal Being, a certain moral stability of character and life, and a willingness to be disciplined to any lengths in spiritual life. With such a basis for spiritual growth and development, Gita becomes a veritable gospel of a Personal Saviour and Redeemer, and devotion and obedience to Him becomes the only light of one's seeing. Thus both the way and the goal had been set before him in an unmistakable manner, and it is singular that our Ghanshyama, young as he was, never lost sight of these in all his future wanderings and thus was saved from many a pitfall of theory and practice such as naturally abounded



on all sides. Ghanshyama lived with Gopala Yogi for over a year making his place a sort of home for the time being, and left it only when the Yogi passed away. It was perhaps here that he got the name Nilkantha Brahmachari, a name by which we shall now call him.

From here he went to the East, i. e. Bengal where he passed some time. This land at the time we are speaking of was steeped in superstition and rank *tantric* practices in the name of religion. As a natural consequence of these there were many who were ever ready to take advantage of the simplicity and gullibility of the people, and these had attained power and position everywhere. It was no wonder if, as is said, Nilkantha came in conflict with some of these in some places. His great austerity and purity of character, his earnestness and spiritual aspiration, offered a complete contrast to all such people, and evidently his life was an eloquent though silent judgment on theirs. In Jagannath Puri, the most important place of pilgrimage in the Eastern part of India, he came very near losing his life. Here he was ordered by a Sadhu, belonging to a group with which he had for the time being cast his lot, to bring some green vegetables from the fields. This he refused to do on account of his tender regard for vegetable life, whereupon he was cruelly treated by the Sadhu. As a result of this, there was a big quarrel among the Sadhus themselves, so much so that many were wounded seriously.

On his way to Puri he had a happier experience which might well be mentioned here in passing. He came to know in one place a family which appreciated his worth very much and came to have much regard for him. He passed some days with them, and as they would not let him leave their home, one night he came away without telling them. Upon this the mother who had come to look upon him as almost a son, sent her only son after him to bring him back. Jairamdas, as he was called, came upon Nilkantha some distance from Puri, and requested him to go back with him to his house. Nilkantha on the other hand asked him to go to Puri with him and prevailed upon him to do so. Jairamdas after staying some time with Nilkantha in Puri started for his home alone as the latter would not go with him, but he fell seriously ill on the way with the result that his love for the world was gone, and he started again in search for his friend Nilkantha. He, however, found him many years after in Kathiawad, and became a Sadhu of the Swami Narayana Satsang.

Nilkantha started from Puri for the South where he visited all the important places of pilgrimage such as Shiv Kanchi, Vishnu Kanchi, Shri Ranga, Rameshwar, Dhanushkoti etc. In one of these places called Totradi, he met one Jiyar Swami, a Tri-dandi Sannyasi whose disciple he became, and he was sealed by him with the seal of the wheel. He later on took a turn towards the Malabar coast, and in course of time going northwards came to Pandharpur, the centre of Vithoba worship in Maharashtra. The next important place he

visited was Nasik-Trimbuck, and from there turned towards Kathiawad to visit Dwarka, the home of Krishna and as such the most important place of pilgrimage in the Western part of India.

There is an authentic story heard from his own mouth and given in the book called Vachanamrit, the collection of his discourses, which well illustrates the character of the young neophyte at this stage of his life. It is this:

On his way to Rameshwar, he came across a man called Sevakram in whose company he travelled. This man had an attack of dysentery, and as he was not able to move Nilkantha remained with him in one place for full two months, nursing and tending him very carefully. This man had some money with him from which he spent very liberally over his own feeding and comfort, whereas Nilkantha had to depend on the alms he received from the people of the village near which they had made their halt. Although Nilkantha had a very hard time and sometimes had to be satisfied with very little, this man would not help him with a pie\* even. Later on when Sevakram became strong again, they started on their journey, and Sevakram made Nilkantha carry his things which was a heavy load indeed. All this treatment he bore for quite a long time taking Sevakram to be a senior Sadhu, but there was a limit to his patience, and he left him taking him to be an ungrateful man.

Nilkantha undoubtedly suffered much in the course of these wanderings from men like Sevakram and even worse, but all such treatment which he bore in the

\*The smallest coin in India.

best Sadhu spirit only shows him to greater advantage. Not only was he guileless himself, but he was ever ready to help and succour others, and the service of older men and especially Sadhus he seems to have taken as his badge at this stage.

There are also other traits of his character which seem to have had a remarkable development by the time he came to Kathiawad, where his wanderings came to an end after a period of about seven years. The most noticeable of these was his asceticism. The extremely austere life that he had led all these years had reduced him to a skeleton, and all accounts of him at the time when he emerges into notice show him as one in whose body every vein was visible and protruded itself. He himself described later on the aim that he had set before himself while practising this asceticism in these words : " Like Kartika Swami I was actuated by this motive that I should not allow any part of my mother's body, i. e. flesh and blood, to remain in my body. In order to do this I took much pains to dry up my body, and I succeeded to such an extent that even when any part of my body was cut, it was water and not blood that would come out.\*" One of the results of this drying up was that he was not able to sweat or perspire, and later on his Guru Swami

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\* A similar story is told of George Fox, the founder of Quakerism. At the age of nineteen, because of his religious practices, he was extremely emaciated and fell seriously ill. The doctors then wanted to let out his blood, but they found that there was none.

Ramananda had to take medical measures to bring out perspiration.

This asceticism was not an unrelated thing. It was a part of a greater whole, which was Yoga. Gopal Swami had initiated him into it, and his constant and arduous practice of it extending over years had made him an adept in it although he was so young, as all later accounts amply testify. Yoga demands absolute chastity in thought, word and deed from all who would practise it, and Nilkantha seems to have taken this lesson to heart as but few men. Even this chastity is only a part of Yoga and has to be accompanied by such virtues as patience, perseverance, self-discipline, forbearance, forgiveness etc. Nilkantha had made as great progress in the attainment of all these as in Chastity and Asceticism.

But more than all these, his Bhakti or devotion to God was not allowed to be lost in the sands of Advaita-Vad, i. e. Monism of Shankara with which he must have come in close contact in many a place in his wanderings. His belief in Shri Krishna as the supreme Incarnation, which probably he had received as a legacy from his parents, had become firmer and more developed during these years. He practised Yoga for the attainment of a vision of Krishna. He had not succeeded in doing this which was the last step on the path of Yoga, and he was in search of a Guru who would lead him to this. It would seem that all these wanderings were primarily for this purpose rather

than for pilgrimage. The way in which he came alone to Kathiawad and stayed with Swami Muktananda in the absence of Swami Ramananda the head of the Fellowship with which he came to be identified so closely later on, and the fact that after he met Swami Ramananda he did not even so much as care to go to Dwarka—all this shows the intensity of his religious life as well as keen search for a true Guru who would satisfy him in all things and provide him with that atmosphere which he was seeking all these weary years.

In addition to all these attainments of Yoga and Bhakti, he had gathered a great deal of what we may call wisdom in the best sense of the term. He had seen from the inside all sorts of people belonging to different parts of India, groups of men and ascetics belonging to various sects good, bad and indifferent, religious movements and fellowships of various kinds—he had known men at their best and their worst such as would be possible for few people to do, especially during these tender years. All this had given him an insight into human nature which was as keen as deep. It is true his primary aim was that of religious realization, but he seems to have kept his eyes wide open even in regard to mundane matters, and so when the time came for him soon after to lead the movement, he did it with a firmness and dexterity which only the greatest among religious teachers have shown.

His wanderings were destined to come to an end soon. He had been over three-quarters of Bharat-

Khand, the sub-continent of Hindustan, all on foot, and had visited practically every important centre of pilgrimage in the North, East, South and West. That he had not found his spiritual home for seven years and was going about all alone, affords a singular commentary on the times in which he was living. The religious life of the people, and especially of those who professed to practise and teach religion, of various mendicant orders, of sects in their headquarters, of the places of pilgrimage all over the land must have degenerated in the extreme. It was only because of this that a lad, a stripling like Nilkantha was wandering through the length and breadth of the land without any protection or company. His fine spiritual susceptibilities made it impossible for him to live in any company which was lacking in true religion. That he found his spiritual home at once in this new Fellowship into which he was about to be ushered now, is a testimony at once to his deep spiritual quest, hunger and thirst for true spiritual fellowship, and also to the noble character of the Fellowship.

His asceticism and spiritual attainments were not without their due effect on his body and external appearance. He was extremely emaciated as has been said before, a fact which at the very first sight testified to his great asceticism and renunciation. This was especially remarkable in one so young, one who was in his teens, and it made itself felt as a spiritual power wherever he

One was at once arrested by the fact that be-

fore him stood one who was in tremendous earnest about life and its purpose, and further acquaintance only increased one's sense of wonder that one so young should have made such extraordinary spiritual progress. Here was a rare spirit, one of the rarest in Indian religious history, who was waiting to ripen and to come to his full stature, and all that was necessary for this purpose was the touch of a Master and the atmosphere of a right kind of Fellowship, both of which were waiting for him in this land of Saurashtra. It may with even greater truth be said that both—Nilkantha and this Fellowship—were waiting for each other to be brought together and to find their perfection.

The beginning of this great consummation took place in the following manner. On the sixth day of the dark half of the month of Shravana in 1856 Samvat, he came to Loj, a small place in Kathiawad, and it was there that he found a home which brought an end to his wanderings after they had lasted for seven years, one month and eleven days. His first appearance to a member of this company has been thus recorded :—

Maharaj Shri ( the Lord ) was sitting on the bank of a well in Loj when Swami Sukhananda ( a disciple of Swami Ramananda ) came for bath, and seeing the stranger asked him who he was. The Maharaj in reply said to him something about himself, whereupon the latter invited him to their place saying that there lived Swami Muktananda, a truly venerable person. To this the Maharaj replied that he did not live in any house, it being a vow of his not to do so



but to live in the open. At this Sukhananda said, "If you will not come, Swami Muktananda himself will come to fetch you." On seeing that these people were truly humble as Sadhus should be, the Maharaj consented to go. When he saw Swami Muktananda and other Sadhus, and knew something of their way of life, he consented to stay there and wait for Swami Ramananda, the leader of these Sadhus, who was away on one of his preaching tours at this time.

Swami Muktananda was a true Sadhu as we shall have ample opportunity to see later on, and in the absence of his master, he took care of this young stranger as only a parent could. It was some months before Swami Ramananda came, and during this time a kind of deep spiritual friendship, a sort of mutual reverence and looking upon each other as a Guru, sprang up between these two, which lasted for the next thirty years, to the end of their lives, and which forms one of the most beautiful chapters of the history of this fellowship. Muktananda instinctively came to see that this boy Nilkantha, whom he had now given the name Sarjudas, was a great spirit, and he did not hesitate to learn lessons from him. Other Sadhus also were charmed with the newcomer, and they all passed their time in mutual edification. Evidently Nilkantha Sarjudas found the atmosphere quite congenial. In the midst of all this, however, he was anxiously waiting for Swami Ramananda's return which was soon expected. He wanted to know the Master who had been a source of attraction to so many noble spirits. As the latter, however, did not come at the appointed time, he became impatient, and

was eager to leave for Cutch, the province in which Swami Ramananda was at that time. Upon this both Muktananda and Nilkantha wrote letters to Swami Ramananda which are given below:

To

The most revered, most gracious and merciful saviour of sinners and lover of devotees, Swami and Lord in Bhuj, from his servants of servants Sadhu Muktananda, Ramgalola, etc. in Loj.

We beg hereby to write that a Brahmchari in the dress of a Khakhi has come here in search of you travelling all over the country from the east of Hindustan. On seeing him our mind has found peace: such is his appearance and manner. He is quite young but highly proficient in Yoga. He asks questions which we are not able to answer properly; such is his power. He does not want to stay here, and says that he will go to \*Jivanmukta Ramananda Swami. But we thought that it would be best to call your Worship here, and so have sent this letter with Bhatt Mayarama. Kindly, therefore, return at once with Bhatt, otherwise this Brahmchari will not remain here, and we shall not find such a Yogi again. This Yogi has yellow hair on his head, a big Tulsi bead round his neck, a girdle round his waist, a deer-skin, a rosary, a kerchief, a piece of cloth for filtering water and a small MS. He does not take any solid food and so all the veins in his body look green in colour; nor does there seem to be any blood in his body, and if a woman's shadow approaches him he vomits. He has too many great and noble qualities to be mentioned in this letter, but you can know of them from Bhattjee, and you will see that for yourself when you come here. Kindly give our salutations

\*One who has attained salvation and freedom.

to Sadhu. Raghunathdasjee, Bhakta Hirjee, Sunderjee, Gangaram etc.

Written on the fifth day of the dark half of the month of Falgun of the year 1856 Samvat by the servant of servants Muktananda who sends his profound salutations.

The letter of Nilkantha Surjudas stands thus: —

To,

Swami Ramananda, the true Guru, who is shining like the sun in Bhujat present with salutations and prostrations from his servant Nilkantha Brahmchari *alias* Sarjudas now living in Loj.

I beg to write this in order to let you know that I have come to this part of the country after finishing my pilgrimage in all the four great centres with the will of God. Here I heard that a Jivanmukta has manifested himself. Besides when I was learning Yoga from Gopal Yogi living with him in a forest, and when I attained mastery over Astanga Yoga, he told me that I would find a Siddha\* in the shadow of Mt. Girnar. After that I passed many a day living only on air, but I could not see the Krishna Incarnate. Now I have stayed here knowing this to be holy land and hearing from Swami Muktananda whom I look upon as a holy man and therefore as one who would tell the truth, that you give a vision of Krishna in †Dharna. Swamijee and Bhattjee told me that they would call your worship here and so I stayed. This is why Bhattjee has come there, and so kindly return soon after reading both these letters. I am eager to see you as a *chakor*‡ is to see the moon, and so kindly come back soon, otherwise I shall come there.

\*A perfected man.

†An intenser form of meditation.

‡A kind of bird considered to be very fond of the moon.

This is written on the fifth of Falgun, Vad. Please be merciful on reading this, otherwise I shall not stay.

On the receipt of these letters Swami Ramananda is reported to have said that he for whom he had been waiting had come, whereupon one of his disciples called Laljee, who later on became a Sadhu known as Nishkulananda and was famous as a great poet of the Fellowship, said : "Like whom is this newcomer; is he like.....?" To this, the Swami replied, "No, he is much greater." Laljee asked again: "Is he like yourself then?" The reply was: "What am I even in comparison with him? He is much greater than I."

Whatever this be, Swami Ramananda gave a very characteristic reply to young Nilkantha who was getting impatient. He wrote to him that if he was desirous of attaining salvation he should stay on even if it was necessary for him to be bound to a pillar for that purpose, that he should obey Swami Muktananda in his absence and that he himself would soon return. As soon as this letter was received, Nilkantha got up and embraced a pillar, leaving it only when Swami Muktananda asked him to do so. During the days that followed impatience left him, and he followed Swami Muktananda in everything.

This was not all, however. He had already made his influence felt in this circle, and was responsible for more than one innovation of a very far-reaching character. He could never have done this had he not possessed extraordinary strength of character, and the

way in which Swami Muktananda, veteran as he was, allowed him to make these changes, reflects credit on both the old leader and the youthful stranger. The chief of these changes was nothing less than a total separation of men and women in religious meetings, a separation which has become a principal characteristic of the Fellowship ever since. It was thus that the change was effected. Once while the usual daily religious meeting was held, and Swami Muktananda, who was an eloquent preacher, was conducting the Katha, i. e. taking a Scriptural story or text and giving his exposition thereupon, and his audience was spell-bound, Nilkantha, thinking that it was not proper to hold such mixed meetings, started preaching at a little distance and invited all the male members of the meeting to come to him. He was immediately surrounded by these, and only women were left with Swami Muktananda. The latter at once realized the meaning and the power of the young man, and cutting short his discourse said: "I have finished: henceforth I too shall attend the meeting conducted by Nilkantha."

There was another incident which took place during these days, and that too might well be mentioned here. The house adjoining the one in which the Sadhus lived was that of a Grihastha, i. e. a householder, and in the wall which was common between the two houses, there was a hole through which the Sadhus used to take fire from the family. As there were women in that house, it seemed very

improper to young Nilkantha to do this, and consequently he built up the hole.

Thus from the very start he wanted to effect a complete separation between the two sexes, so far as religious meetings etc. were concerned. The reference that he made to this later on was that he had brought with him from his home in the other world a nausea for the sex-side of life, and it was because of this that he wanted to separate the sexes, the very nature of which was to make men and women unite and run into one another and thus to forget God.

It would not be out of place here to appraise the significance of a measure which was so radical. It may be said at the outset that there has not been perhaps a single religious movement of the size and power of this in the religious history of the world which has gone the length to which this went in the matter. Islam may be cited as one that has been even more radical than this, but therein the principle underlying the separation of the sexes in religious meetings and places is neither ascetic nor spiritual. There it is not so much a separation as a total exclusion of women from organised religious life. In the present movement the women have a highly organised religious life of their own, nor is the separation between sexes absolute, for the big temples are open to both sexes, and both men and women come together in big conventions. None the less, the separation is there and more than anywhere else in the East or the

West. Individuals and small groups of people may have practised such rigorous separation from the other sex, but it has never been maintained as a principle by any Church or Fellowship. Even such ascetic religions as Buddhism and Jainism have allowed mixed meetings to be held; rather it is a universal practice with them, and it is the unique feature of the latter that even women i. e. nuns, conduct meetings which are attended both by men and women. Whether this innovation introduced by Nilkantha at this stage and later on made by him a permanent institution of the body was right or wrong, or has had good or evil effects is kept here an open question, and it is only to the uniqueness of it that the attention is drawn. The present writer, however, is constrained to make one observation, viz., that the movement which was led by Nilkantha for thirty years, and which has had a century of existence since his time, has suffered less from sexual evil than most movements of a similar kind. It may have other shortcomings, but so far as chastity is concerned, both the Sadhus and the laity of this body are not behind those of any other religious body anywhere. Attainment of absolute chastity known as eight-fold chastity was the aim of Nilkantha for himself from his early youth, and so full of fire and enthusiasm was he on its behalf that he wanted it to reign supreme in any body with which he cast his lot. This alone explains his extreme zeal for it at this stage and all through his life, and it is due to this that he succeeded in giving a new turn

not only to the movement over which he soon came to preside, but to the entire religious mind of the people of the Province of Gujrat which was the main theatre of his work.

From what has been said above, it is not to be understood that women were relegated to a back seat in this body to a larger extent than elsewhere. Nothing of the kind. The ministering to the spiritual needs of women was as much looked after as that of men from the very start, and a special class of women ministers was created for this purpose. The very segregation made it necessary to develop a greater freedom and initiative among women so that they might look after their own spiritual needs. Since women had their own temples, it was essential to have some who could conduct worship and hold meetings, and for this purpose trained women were necessary. From the very beginning of the new movement there were prominent women in it, and their number increased with the need. A class of women corresponding to the Sadhus in many respects came to be formed, and many members of this class were well versed in Shastric lore etc., and along with them many others, especially widows and women of the upper classes, were taught reading and writing. The result of all this was that the women of the new movement on the whole had a higher standard of culture than that of any other.

It may also be said here at the outset that the movement which grew up under Nilkantha was far from a



negation of human life, in spite of this extreme ascetic note. Hinduism has always been very sane and balanced in this as in other matters, and no movement would have any chance to grow if it ran to extremes. What the late Baron von Hugel called the "heroic" and the "homely" aspects of religious life, meaning thereby the ascetic life of the monks and the ordinary life of the laity as found in the Roman Catholic Church, have always been recognized as proper in their respective spheres by the Hindus, and although a Sadhu is usually considered to have a higher spiritual status, no blame attaches to the life of a Grihasta, i. e. householder. Rather both are considered to be mutually complementary and necessary to one another. It may be added here, however, that in the case of the present movement, under the leadership of Nilkantha, while he started with an over-emphasis of the "heroic" in religious life, there was a gradual relaxing of this early rigour and a proper balance between the "heroic" and the "homely."

This great passion for Chastity, Nilkantha owed largely to his Yogic discipline. The principle that sexual sin destroys the integrity of human personality, as very little else, has been thoroughly grasped by the system of Yoga. The man who would tread the path of Yoga must get rid of all distractions first, for it is only then that he can enter the deeper recesses within himself by contemplation and meditation. This is why a Yogi eschews all contact with or thought of woman. Apart from this inheritance got from the system of Yoga, a part of this

passion for Chastity was original to himself as has been already said.

While Nilkantha was thus making these changes and serving at the same time his apprenticeship under Swami Muktananda, not shirking acts of even menial service such as the gathering of cow-dung for fuel, Ramananda Swami came back to Kathiawad from Cutch, and reaching a place called Piplana sent for both Muktananda and Nilkantha. That he was exceedingly pleased and charmed with the neophyte who had come to him in this manner is a thing that can be taken for granted. Possibly the mutual attractions between these two persons were all the greater in as much as the newcomer had come from the North like Ramananda Swami himself, and had gone through experiences similar to those of the latter. Tradition goes the length of saying that Ramananda found on inquiry that he had known and initiated the parents of the young man. Whatever it be, it is certain that the heart of the older man must have warmed at the sight of this young man who possessed such earnestness and single-mindedness, so much genuine spiritual power coupled with real humility, and he may have well felt that the one for whom he was waiting and working had arrived in the guise of this youth.

Nor was the impression on the mind of Nilkantha any the less deep. He seems to have already felt at home with Swami Muktananda and other members of the House with all of whom he passed so many

happy months. This was perhaps the longest period he had lived in any one place since he left Gopal Swami, and from what he saw here he could not but have formed a very high opinion of the man whose word from a distance was law to so many earnest and holy men. All this was more than confirmed when he saw Swami Ramananda in person. The long anxious waiting was not without its fruit, and he seems to have made up his mind soon after this meeting, if he had not done so already before this, to remain in this Fellowship. He was initiated into the body and ordained as a Sadhu by Swami Ramananda very soon after his arrival on the seventh day of the bright half of the month of Kartik in the year Samvat 1854. Two names were given to him along with this ceremony to signify his entry into a new life, viz., Swami Sahajananda and Narayana Muni. It is by these, and chiefly by the first, that he came to be known from this time onward. 26,

## CHAPTER III

### Swami Ramananda

Swami Ramananda stands to his successor Swami Sahajananda in a relation very similar to the one that John the Baptist bore to Jesus Christ. It is singular that the likeness between Ramananda and John is not confined merely to the fact that both of them came as heralds of one greater than themselves, but extends to their characters also. Both of them were strong and original men, and undoubtedly prophets of the Highest. Both of them came at a time when the light of God had faded from the minds of men for centuries perhaps, and it was their mission to witness once more to the glory of God and to His gracious presence in the midst of men.

Ramananda is said to have been born in Vikram Samvat 1795 (1739 A. D.) in a Brahmin family of Gayapuri in Bihar. He was of a religious turn of mind from his childhood, and left home when he was twelve years old for further study. This was the last he saw of his home and parents. In his pilgrimages which seem to have begun almost immediately, he came in course of time to Kathiawad which is visited by every earnest pilgrim on account of Dwarka, the home of Shri Krishna, being situated therein. While in this Province, he came across a Sannyasi called Atmananda and became a disciple of his adopting the name

Ramananda. He lived with him for some time, and was initiated into the Vedanta of the school of Shankaracharya. This soon proved to be unsatisfactory to him, his heart craving for a Personal God, and so he left his Guru in search of a more proper one. He went to the seat of Shri Ramanuja viz., Shri Ranga in the South, and it was here that he is said to have been initiated into Vaishnavism - faith in and worship of Vishnu, the Personal God - by no less a person than the great Acharya himself in a dream. He was also given the *Mantra*-the name of God - which would help him to have the vision of Shri Krishna, the God Incarnate. He was also commanded along with this to preach this purer form of faith into which he had been so miraculously initiated. He, accordingly, started such work there and then, and it was no wonder that he came in conflict with the priests and leaders of Shri Vaishnavism, the school of thought and the sect following the teaching of Shri Ramanuja. From here Ramananda went to the North, where he visited Brindabana, the famous place of pilgrimage and a most important centre of Krishna-worship. Here he is said to have a vision of Krishna himself. He also received a direct command to preach Vaishnavism and establish a new Sampradaya. Then he went about making disciples and finally settled down in Kathiawad.

It is quite possible that in the account given here legend has mingled with historical facts, and that a later generation has read its own mind in the first

beginnings of the movement. Such a thing is inevitable. There is no doubt, however, that Ramananda, the forerunner of Swami Sahajananda, had singular experiences in his many wanderings and pilgrimages, and he seems to have emerged therefrom with a determination, born of inspiration, to preach a purer form of faith than what was known to people at that time. It is undoubted that the religious life of the people at that time was at its lowest ebb, and reform was urgently necessary.

The man who started his work under such auspices was not an ordinary one. During the years that followed he seems to have had much success among high and low, and his doctrine, which was true and pure, and more than that the purity and force of his character were a source of attraction to many noble spirits of the time. In almost all the sects there were some who were sick of the corruptions abounding in them, and these were groaning in spirit and waiting for the dawn of a better day. The accounts of some of these who became disciples of Ramananda and later on of Swami Sahajananda are remarkable for the deep earnestness and passion for salvation with which they were filled, and which led them on to spiritual heights where their lives were loaded heavily with rich blessing and fruit. The following account of one of these, the most notable of them all, who became a disciple of Ramananda, is characteristic of the movement:

Muldas had left home under a strong impulse of Vairagya, i. e. asceticism, and after going the round of many a place of pilgrimage, he came and settled down in

one of the monasteries in Kathiawad. The head of the place ordained him as a Sadhu, and, giving him the name of Mukunddas, kept him with him as a trusted follower. While he was here, Swami Ramananda came to the town and taught the people in a public place for several days. Mukunddas, while returning from his ablutions one day, passed by the place where the meeting was held, and he just listened to the exposition of a text given by Ramananda. The text was on Chastity, and as Mukunddas was struggling very hard to be free from desire or lust during these days, on hearing Ramananda his desire suddenly vanished and he heard him to the end on that day. As he returned late, the head of the house asked him the reason therefor, whereupon he told him of the powerful preacher who had come to the town. Upon this the head became anxious lest this disciple whom he valued very much might be drawn to the new preacher and consequently leave him, and so he told Mukunddas that they had many books of their own which he might read himself or get expounded by some Pundit at their own place. The reply of Mukunddas was that although he had read and heard much, his lustful thoughts and desires had not vanished, whereas his listening to this preacher only once had effected that change in his mind. Upon this the other said that such a thing was impossible, and added that though it was many years since he had seen a woman point out something with her bare arm, he had found it difficult to forget her and her arm. Mukunddas replied to this that whatever that be, he was sure of the change that had taken place in his own heart. After this talk Kalyandas, i. e. the head of the house, thought that this disciple was of a different stamp from others, and that he would leave him unless he was saddled with responsibility of position and power. He did this immediately, but Mukunddas would not be kept from going to hear Ramananda Swami. A little later when the latter was about to leave the place, Mukund-

das went to him and told him that he would like to go with him, whereupon Ramananda asked him to bring a letter from his Guru to the effect that he was allowed to come. This was impossible, and so Mukunddas had recourse to a singular method of finding his release. As he was now installed in office, he began to give away the property of the monastery with the result that his master became frightened and let him go. He gave him in writing that he had no claim on him, and Mukunddas came to Swami Ramananda with the letter. The latter, however, would try him still more. He told him that he would take him as a disciple only if he did whatever he was asked to do. On Mukunddas consenting to do this, Swami Ramananda asked him to put on the dress of a farmer, take a plough and go and serve Mulubhai ( another disciple of his ) as a help on his farm. Mukunddas gladly did all this whereupon Ramananda made him a Sadhu.

This Mukunddas was no other than Swami Muktananda. He came to be the foremost disciple of Swami Ramananda in course of time, and after his master was gone followed Swami Sahajananda, the youthful Nilkantha whom he had taken under his protection and shelter, with even greater allegiance. He served this new Master with a fidelity and tenderness which were most remarkable and had something of the divine in them. The story of how he served him and the Satsang, the Holy Fellowship, for the next thirty years is as remarkable as any in religious history, and he has left an example and aroma behind him which are second only to that of the great leader, Swami Sahajananda.

As for Swami Ramananda, the little that is known of him shows him to be a man of great strength



of character and this left its impress upon everything that he said or did. In the midst of so much emotionalism that prevailed all round him and that has been almost always one of the chief characteristics of much of Vaishnavism, his life with its rugged moral purity and genuine religion of the heart presents a great contrast. His moral passion was almost elemental in him, and to many it might appear even as too much of a good thing. But to those who know something of the moral evil prevailing in his days in the name of religion, and of religious eroticism which was common even amongst the best of Vaishnavas, his life and work have a refreshing touch about them. These served as a moral dynamic in his time, and have even now the properties of a moral tonic. He was indeed a man after Carlyle's heart. As Swami Sahajananda said about him later on, he had in him the nature of Rama, the great hero of the Ramayana, who is worshipped as an incarnation, and who did not hesitate to send in exile even his dearest wife Sita for what practically was no fault of hers but out of a stern sense of duty which he owed to his subjects as their king. This, according to Swami Sahajananda, showed great strength, but it belonged to the older dispensation and as such had no place in his own life and work.

There are a few stories extant of Swami Ramanda, for one or two of which room might be made here to show what kind of a man he was. Here is one :

There was an ascetic of Kutch who had been four times to Jagannath situated at the other end of India, a distance of more than fifteen hundred miles. This was not all. It was his practice to go from Kutch to Benares, take the holy water of Ganges in two pails attached to a pole, and carry it to Jagannath for the use of the great image there. He would then return again to Benares, take water and bring it all the way to Dwarka for a similar purpose. While he was proceeding for the fifth time from Dwarka, two men gave him two gold pieces. With these he left and made a halt for a night with a relation of one of his friends. When he was called to take his dinner, he took his seat after sprinkling water on the ground whereupon he sat in order to make it clean. Seeing this, the lady of the house observed : " You take care to circumscribe the ground whereon you take your meal, but have you taken care to circumscribe your heart ? " To this the ascetic replied that he did not exactly understand what she meant, whereupon she told him : " I am not allowed to talk to strangers, but you can have a talk over the matter with my father-in-law who is sitting outside, and he will tell you all about it. " After finishing his meal, the ascetic went out and spoke about the matter to the old man and asked for the explanation of what his daughter-in-law had said. At this the old man who was a disciple of Swami Ramananda said : " The only thing necessary for salvation is to believe in the Incarnate God and to observe full chastity in thought, word and deed, and to be without any desire by giving up all selfish thoughts concerning me and mine. All other things such as ceremonies, sprinklings etc. are altogether out of place. " To this the ascetic replied : " Where can one find the Incarnate God in these days ? " The other replied : " Ramananda Swami is such a one. " He was taken then to Ramananda, and a request was made to the latter

to talk to this ascetic who had come aseeking. At this Ramananda said to the ascetic: "Thou carriest sin\* with thee, and so how canst thou benefit by my teaching?" At this the man gave away his gold pieces and remained with the Swami ultimately becoming a Sadhu of his fellowship.

Even a few miracles are attributed to Swami Ramananda, and we give here the story of one such which has a beautiful human touch about it:

One of his disciples lost his wife, and as there was no one to nurse the child she left, the Swami coming to know of it said to the disciple: "Why don't you nurse the child yourself?" The man replied: "How can I, being a man, get milk in my breasts?" To this the Swami said: "Who provides milk to the woman's breasts? The same will provide you with milk." The man tried this with the result that he was able to suckle the child which grew up and later on became a Sadhu.

The following story also deserves to be given as it throws light on another aspect of his character:

In Jetpur, a Brahmin came every day to Swami Ramananda to know his doctrine. The Swami, however, would leave off talking on spiritual matters even with others as soon as this man came, and would begin to talk on other things. This man persisted in coming for a month at the end of which he was no nearer the mind of the Swami. Thinking that the Swami would pray to God while bathing and that he would thus know something of his doctrine, he went to the river where the Swami had his usual bath, and watched him. There the Swami, while pouring water over his head, was saying: "Oh, Father! oh, Mother!" whereupon the Brahmin went close to him and said: "Good sir, to

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\*This was considered sin for him because he was a Sadhu and not a householder.

whom are you praying?" The Swami replied, "Thou hast been coming to me for a month, but as thou never askedst any questions so far I never said anything. Now that thou hast asked, I say this: God alone is Father and Mother, and everything else is false." The man became a disciple.

The thing that is specially remembered in this Satsang in connection with Swami Ramananda is the prophecy to which he gave utterance again and again, viz. that he would be followed by a successor who was much greater than himself. He used to say: "I am only the tambourine player, and am come to prepare the ground and call the people, for the main player in the drama will soon come." He is also reported to have said: "I have put only two bricks together in a house of seven stories, and the real builder of the house is to follow soon." He also said, "I have spun only an ounce of cotton in a ton, but he who will spin the whole amount will soon come."

Whatever view the disciples of Swami Ramananda may have taken of him while he was with them, he came to be known in course of time under the leadership of Swami Sahajananda as an incarnation of Uddhava, the disciple of Krishna whom he had left behind to spread his doctrine. It seems some of the disciples found it hard to believe this at first, but so great was the power and influence of Swami Sahajananda that the view he took of his predecessor came to be universally accepted. It is from this identification of Swami Ramananda with Uddhava that this church or fellowship is called Uddhava Sampradaya.

## CHAPTER IV

### Swami Ramananda and Sahajananda

We have already seen how the person for whom Swami Ramananda had been waiting came to him. Whatever it be, Ramananda must have found a great treasure in this youthful aspirant who had already gone through experiences similar to and even greater than those he had at his age. Here was one who had realized some of the dreams of spiritual life which the Swami had, and who brought his own prophecy and its fulfillment at the same time. Seeing him, the older man saw the wonderful possibilities of the Satsang he had led so far under the leadership of such a successor, and it is no wonder if he tried his utmost to give the best that he had in him to Sahajananda. He had suddenly found an heir and successor, a spiritual son in a sense deeper than anything he had realized in regard to anyone else, and evidently Sahajananda must have evoked in Ramananda something higher than he had known so far, great as he was.

Whatever little we know of the relations between these two men is enough to show that they were deep and tender. Ramananda, with a father's solicitude, set himself to the task of improving the physical condition of Sahajananda. He called in whatever medical aid was available for the purpose of bringing out perspiration from the over-emaciated body of Sahajananda, and got

his body rubbed with oil mixed with wax in order to remove the stiffness of some of the joints and members of his body, which had become crooked and crippled owing to his severe asceticism and some of the physical exercises connected with his Yogic practices.

In spiritual matters their relations became very close. Ramananda Swami made it the duty of Swami Sahajananda to make all the necessary preparations for his private devotions and to join him in them. This was in all probability the greatest privilege that he could confer on the young man, for it was only at this time that Ramananda Swami was able to initiate him into those secrets of meditation and worship which he himself had realized. In addition to this he kept him with him all the time so that Sahajananda might gain from him all that could be learnt by teaching as well as by presence. Talks on religious subjects were a part of the daily routine, and all took part in them according to their capacity. Of the very few stories which are extant of this period, one is such a talk which, even though it be a later growth, shows well the spirit of the Fellowship at this early stage. One day while the meeting was held, Ramananda Swami asked his disciples, Muktananda being the chief among them, why it was that God did not come to the rescue of His servants in these days with His weapon as He did when He came in the form of Krishna with his disc. Was this because the Bhaktas i. e. the believers, of these days were in any way less worthy of such solicitude on the part of God?

Muktananda to whom the question was put pointed to Sahajananda as the proper person to answer it and he being asked replied that the Bhaktas of these days were superior to those of olden days and so they did not desire any physical protection from their God; that their one aim was to secure protection from their spiritual enemies such as pride, lust, anger, etc., and that they were happy when they found such protection. He added that the disc which God sent forth to-day was a spiritual one, that it destroyed spiritual darkness and sin, and that God did this because He loved the Bhaktas more and not less, and came to their succour as soon as they desired it and in the way they liked.

Another story said to have come down from these times gives an explanation of their mutual relationship as Guru and Shishya; i. e. Teacher and Disciple, a relationship which was anomalous because the Disciple was the greater of the two, and as such needed explanation. Once Sahajananda said to Ramananda: "You are the Supreme Being and I shall follow you in everything." To this the Swami did not reply and he turned away. Thrice was this said to him, and every time he did the same. Soon after this a Mohammedan came to the meeting, and the Swami put him in a trance wherein he saw Heaven, and found Sahajananda in the place of God, and Ramananda as one of those who served him along with many others. On coming out from the trance, he said "What an unnatural course you Hindus

follow? The servant occupies the seat of honour while God Himself is occupying a lower seat." To this the Swami replied: "This is an ancient practice of ours. Vashista used to have the seat of honour while Rama occupied a lower seat."

In one of the versions of this story Sahajananda is said to have induced this trance, and the preliminary part of the story is lacking. But whatever may be the truth behind the story and whatever elements of it may have been due to the growth of thought of a later date, the presence of the Mohammedan in it adds a realistic touch to it, and it also shows along with other testimony that Moslems were connected with this Fellowship from early days.

For a period less than two years, Ramananda and Sahajananda lived together, during which time the Swami took him to many places, and imparted to him as much knowledge and wisdom as he could. To him the young man was a gift of God, the greatest he had, and naturally he thought of perfecting him as much as possible. He had come to feel evidently that the time for him to depart from this world was approaching, and he thought of making this young man the head of the Church. This was certainly a very bold resolution, and it showed the great originality as well as deep insight of the man. There were more than one person in the Satsang able enough to take the lead, Muktananda being the principal among them, and all these were far senior in age as well as



experience of the world to this young man. These men had been, moreover, in the Satsang for a long time, and they were known and respected by the large circle of disciples everywhere. On the other hand Sahajananda was barely twenty years old at this time, and he had been in the Satsang for a year and half. There were no ties to prevent him to take to his wandering life again. That he should have been selected in view of all this in preference even to a man like Muktananda who was held in universal respect in the Satsang for his age, spiritual experience and character, was not only a very bold step but a most risky one too. It was then no ordinary faith in Providence as well as in this youthful Nilkantha which led Ramananda Swami to appoint him as the Acharya of the Satsang, and the results, as we shall see, more than justified this faith.

In regard to this matter, however, the principal difficulty came from the young man himself. He felt great hesitation in accepting the heavy responsibility which such an office would involve. More than that, however, he was afraid lest that might lead him in too close a contact with the world. As an Acharya he must needs accept worship from both men and women, and he should also have something to do with money. This was too much of a burden for him, for as we have seen he was an ascetic of ascetics who had eschewed all sorts of contacts both with Kanta (woman) and Kanak (gold). He desired, besides, with all his heart a life of solitude in the midst of forests and jungles,

and he had almost persuaded Swami Muktananda before he had seen Swami Ramananda that soon after the latter came and led him to the last stage of realization, both of them, i. e. Muktananda and Nilkantha, would leave for a secluded life in the forests. He was more at home in the midst of mountains and forests with their wild beauty and peaceful life, and even later in life when his success as an Acharya was assured, he would at times look back with regret to those days which he had passed in the lap of Mother Nature. Because of this when the offer was made to him, he respectfully refused to be saddled with such responsibility, and it was only the persistent persuasion of the Swami himself that led him ultimately to accept it. To his objections the Swami replied that he was the only one who could be fully relied upon not to be bound by the world in any way while discharging this heavy responsibility. His very solicitude that he should not be soiled by any too close contact with the world or the flesh fitted him all the more for an office to which only persons of his stamp could do full justice. This, together with the fact that such a course was desired by one whom he had come to look upon as a Guru ( Teacher ) whose wishes he was bound to fulfill, reconciled Nilkantha to the acceptance of the office. He may have been disposed to do so all the more readily in as much as this seems to be the last wish of the Master whose life was ebbing away. Accordingly a sort of installation ceremony was performed by which the office of the Acharya was conferred on him, and he

came to be formally recognized as the person with power and authority next only to Swami Ramananda and as his successor.

Swami Sahajananda is said to have asked for two boons of his Guru which were conferred on him. They are these : (1) That he should be able to fulfill all his responsibility in a proper manner with his whole being set on God, and without being bound by the world in any way in the performance of this duty; (2) That he should take upon himself whatever miseries the members of the Satsang were destined to suffer from, whether due to poverty or as a result of their previous evil deeds.

It was in this sacrificial, vicarious manner that Swami Sahajananda took his responsibility from the start, and it will be our pleasant task to show how he more than fulfilled the rich promise which had been seen in him by Swami Ramananda, and thus fully justified the faith the latter placed in him. Evidently Ramananda was waiting for this installation to take place before he bade good-bye to the world, for within a month after this he passed away, the day being the thirteenth of the bright half of the month of Margshirsh 1858 Samvat. This made Sahajananda, who had hardly finished his twenty years, the head of a movement that was powerful and growing, a fact which, together with the circumstances in which it took place, is as remarkable as any in the religious history of the world. His coming to the Satsang when he was a mere lad of eighteen, his stay in it for two years and a half,

and his being thus invested with this high and responsible office, all this makes it one of the most dramatic episodes of this religious body, and it has perhaps few parallels in the history of any other body.

The part that Swami Muktananda played in this divine drama deserves mention also. He was the chief of Ramananda's disciples, and was fully worthy of the place that was thus conferred on the youngster. He had the character and experience requisite for it, and his age was in his favour. He had also fathered the young man and had been in the place of a Guru to him for some time at any rate. From the point of view of ordinary humanity, therefore, it was no slight humiliation for him to have been passed over in favour of this young man who had come like a bird of passage and might go as he came at any time he pleased. But so strong was his faith in the judgment of Ramananda and in the capacity and fitness of Sahajananda, that not a word of protest was uttered by him. Nay, his was not a merely negative acquiescence; it was an enthusiastic acceptance of what his Master did, and he readily accepted the youngster, who was only a short while ago his disciple, as his master. He could have easily deposed the young man after Ramananda's death had he so wished, and the whole body would have in all likelihood followed him in such a step, but he was too big to take such a course. Many years he lived after this, years of great faithfulness to the memory of his master and of even greater

faithfulness to Swami Sahajananda, while the latter looked upon him all the years of his life as he did at first, and with him the whole body too. It was thus that his great act of self-abnegation came to be rewarded, and he came to be known in course of time as the mother of the Satsang. He indeed rightly occupies the third place in this great Fellowship.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Beginnings of Ministry**

Swami Sahajananda did not find his new position a bed of roses. Looking to the way he was appointed, it was natural that his authority should be challenged. The last will and testament of Ramananda as this appointment of Sahajananda to the position of the Acharya might be called required a great deal of faith for its understanding and acceptance, and there was but one Muktananda in the body. The result was that several men set themselves up as the head of the Satsang, each claiming to be the legitimate successor of Swami Ramananda. Among these there were two women also. These were powerful preachers and leaders, and being as old as Swami Ramananda, if not older, and co-disciples with him of their common Guru Swami Atmananda, they refused to accept the ruling of this youngster, who was young enough to be their grandson, that they should confine their preaching to women alone. As a result of this protest on their part, they were excommunicated by Swami Sahajananda, and they started their work independently. Being old, they soon after this event passed away, leaving some following. Their names were Valbai and Harbai; one of them came from the potter caste and the other was a farmer.

As for those men who separated themselves from Sahajananda, only one, a Sadhu called Raghúnathdas

who lived in Ahmedabad, was able to secure some followers, and he and some fifteen Sadhus separated themselves from the Satsang. There were about four temples with the images of Rama, Sita and Laxman—all that the Satsang had in the time of Ramananda. It must be added here, however, that they were situated far apart, one in Bhuj in Cutch, another in Mangrol in Kathiawad and two in Ahmedabad, which fact shows the pretty wide range of Ramananda's work. Sahajananda did not even care to dispute his right as the head of the body over them. He was too busy with higher things as we shall presently see to fight over vested interests.

Whatever was the magnitude of this revolt of some of the chief disciples of Ramananda at first, the main body seems to have come round the youthful Acharya very soon. This was due solely to the extraordinary qualities of his leadership which manifested themselves from the beginning of his career as an Acharya. Wonderful he was in many ways even when he came to the Satsang, but all the accounts show him to be far more wonderful even in these early days of his ministry than anything he had been so far. He seems to have manifested suddenly great and extraordinary powers, and thereby not only kept the body of the disciples true to himself but attracted large numbers from outside the body.

After finishing all the ceremonies connected with the passing away of Swami Ramananda on the four-

teenth day for which disciples had gathered from different parts, he sent the Sadhus including Muktananda to various places to carry on their propaganda work. He himself left on a tour with some disciples, and wherever he went he created a most profound impression. Miracles are attributed to him at this as at all stages of his life, and there is no doubt that we are moving here in an atmosphere of wonder and supernaturalism which produced lasting and remarkable results in the moral life of individuals and groups. We have no more stories of mere miracles as in the earlier period of his life, i. e. his childhood, boyhood and the the years of his wandering, but such as are given are a record of new spiritual causes with a long chain of visible moral effects.

It will not be possible for us to describe here a tithe, even a hundredth part of these, nor is it necessary for our purpose to do so. It is also impossible to give a consecutive record of the life of Swami Sahajananda, although such a thing has been attempted by more than one disciple of his who have written the life of their Master in the vernacular. To do so with any justice to the subject would fill several volumes such as this, apart from the difficulty of sorting facts in regard to dates and years in the early part of the ministry. For our purpose it is enough if we could give some very characteristic pictures of his life and work at different stages of his long and most eventful ministry, and thereby reproduce some of the atmosphere



of his time and a glimpse of his remarkable personality, not neglecting to give at the same time an outline of historical and chronological events, bare as it may be.

Swami Sahajananda began his ministry with an energy which was nothing short of tremendous. All accounts give testimony to this. Speed, energy, urgency, these were characteristic of his work all through his ministry. He was possessed with a divine power which would not let him rest, nor would he let others rest. As one reads the manifold records of his life, one feels that one of the most spiritually dynamic personalities of history had been let loose on earth, and that this personality left its deep impress on the lives of tens of thousands of people in his own time and since.

The first great manifestation of his power, or his glory as it is called in the literature of the movement, appears to have taken place within a year or two of the beginning of his ministry. According to some accounts, it took place on the thirteenth day after the passing away of Swami Ramananda. Whatever that be, it is an undoubted fact that Sahajananda manifested his power in what is known as Samadhi Prakarana, i.e. Trance\* Chapter which lasted for years in a more or less intensive form. We have already seen that he was a Yogi even before he came to the Satsang. During the two years that he lived in it

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\* Trance is not the best word perhaps for this, nor is the word ecstasy a proper rendering of it.

under Ramananda, or rather soon after his accession to the post of Acharya he seems to have developed his powers of Yoga to such an extent as to induce a trance in almost any one. This was nothing less than a wonder, a miracle, for Samadhi is a thing that is one of the most difficult of attainments in Yoga. All the greater wonder, therefore, that we have here a series of such miracles lasting over a long period, and there is no doubt that they changed the entire character of the Satsang and created a new and higher moral and spiritual order therein.

We shall give here a story of such Samadhi which is said to have been the first of its kind. There are hundreds of similar stories, but we give this chiefly because it is a type of the others, apart from its alleged chronological value.

There was a Brahmin called Shitaldas who renounced the world and was going about seeking God in the form of the true Guru. He roamed about many parts of India and when he came to Kathiawad, he was told that such a Guru was Ramanandajee, but that he had left the world only recently. He came, however, to Swami Sahajananda on the thirteenth day of the passing away of Ramananda. He wanted to leave on the next day, being, in all probability, disappointed at the extreme youth of the new leader, when the latter told him that he would show him Swami Ramananda and asked him to repeat the name of Swami Narayana. (In the time of Ramananda, Rama Krishna Govind was the *mantra*, i. e. the name of God used for worship; this was changed to Swami Narayana on this fourteenth day by Sahajananda. It may be added here that

Swami Sahajananda himself came to be known by this very name and worshipped as such, and it is this name that we have used in this book. Perhaps this is the only instance in the whole of history wherein such a thing has taken place. ) This led him into a trance in which he saw Swami Ramananda in the highest heaven, but only as one adoring and worshipping Swami Sahajananda. He offered worship to Him and then wanted to pay his homage to the infinite number of Muktas, i.e. the saved ones who were seated round the Supreme Being. This was impossible, and seeing his plight, Swami Sahajananda asked him to say to himself that if Ramananda was God himself, he (Shitaldas) might have as many forms as there were of the Muktas. He said this but it was in vain. Then the Master said that he should do the same with every one of the twenty-four Avatars (Incarnations), and this too was in vain. Then he was asked to do this in the name of Sahajananda which he did, and the result was that he was able to pay homage to all the Muktas at the same time. While he was doing this, Ramananda told him that Sahajananda was the Supreme Being, that in Him all the Avatars entered and that He was the Lord of all of them. On regaining his ordinary consciousness, Shitaldas spoke of this to all, but they would not believe in him. They in their turn asked Swami Sahajananda to convince them of this, whereupon he asked them all to repeat the name of Swami Narayana. They did this and had the same vision. On returning to their usual consciousness, they offered worship to Sahajananda as the Supreme Being. As for Shitaldas, he stayed on, and became later on a Sadhu with the name of Vyapakananda.

As said above, this is one account of how the Samadhi ( Trance ) chapter began. Whether this chapter started at this stage or not, the story is a type of

hundreds of similar ones related of other people with a little variation here and there. One constant theme of all of them is that the men and women who had such a vision saw Swami Sahajananda as the Supreme Being, and those whom they had looked upon hitherto as the Supreme, e.g. Rama or Krishna or any one else, were only ministering angels or manifestations of a part of his power. These visions came to people of all communities and creeds including Moslems to whom Prophet Mohammed is said to have appeared along with others as witnessing to the supremacy of Swami Sahajananda, and pointing out to him as the one to be worshipped and followed. The accounts say that at one time Swami Sahajananda manifested this power of giving Samadhi to people in such an intensive form that people remained in it for days and even for months; that the mere sight of him or the sound of his walking with his wooden sandals was sufficient to make people enter into this Samadhi; and that it created a great sensation and a sense of wonder and amazement, awe and fear. Undoubtedly this was a kind of yogic power.\*

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\*The present writer heard some time back from Mr. Jamshed N. Mehta, the well-known public man and philanthropist of Karachi that there came to that city a young Austrian who was able to induce a trance in any one, and who gave a public exhibition of his powers. Mr. Mehta saw this with his own eyes. The Austrian young man wanted to start a Yogic Society and a sort of School for teaching yoga. There is no doubt, however, that in Swami Narayana we have a much intenser and more spiritual form of the same power. The trance in the present case lasted longer and was deeper, and, besides, it was accompanied by a profound religious and moral revival, evidences of which in the history of the movement are innumerable.

Something extremely unusual had happened. Of course, all people were not equally favourably impressed with this new phenomenon. As always, many people would be hostile to the manifestation of such a new power. Reports, both good and bad, began to spread far and wide, and many older men in the Satsang itself began to shake their heads and congratulate themselves that they were right when they prophesied that this stripling would land the Satsang into disaster. All such men, both within and without the Satsang, said that the young man had got some magic power by means of which he was doing this work. Throughout his ministry extending over nearly thirty years, Sahajananda had the reputation of being a kind of magician among people who were not well disposed to him and to his work, and evidently it had its beginnings here.

But some were pained at this phenomenon, and who should be more so than Swami Muktananda who had served the Satsang for so many years, and had loved it as only the best of parents can? He was deeply pained and troubled at the reports of these happenings that he heard in the province of Kutch where he was working, and he wondered if his master had after all made a mistake in entrusting this youngster with the high position of the Acharya. He was hurt thinking that this young man whom he had taken under his own protection and fathered was perhaps unworthy of the trust conferred on him, and what was worse, was thus ruining the work of his late Master, Swami Ramananda.

All this was too much for him to bear and so he hastened back to Kathiawad where Swami Sahajananda was. They met in Meghpur where he openly rebuked Sahajananda for thus misguiding people, telling him that "he should not practise evil ways and methods in this Holy Fellowship." Whatever may be his suspicions in regard to Sahajananda, they were now confirmed when he saw that the latter had turned the minds of many of the disciples of Swami Ramananda, so much so that they had already begun to look upon him as greater than Swami Ramananda. He was bewildered at all this, and held Sahajananda primarily responsible for it. To the rebuke he gave, Sahajananda calmly and respectfully replied saying that the real truth of the matter will manifest itself, and that he did whatever was true and right. Soon after this one of the disciples of Swami Muktananda, whom he had brought with him, was thrown into a trance which Muktananda found to be a real one. On his coming out of it he said that he had been to the Heaven where he saw two figures, one of Uddhava and the other of Krishna, the former being Swami Ramananda and the latter Swami Sahajananda. He also said that he had been given a message by Swami Ramananda to Muktananda reminding him of the prophecy he used to utter in regard to his being only a herald of one far greater than himself, a prophecy which was now being fulfilled. Even this did not convince Swami Muktananda fully, and his mind was far from rest. The next morning while going out

early for his ablutions along with Swami Sahajananda and others, he was left behind which perhaps added all the more to his pain. While he was in this condition of mental pain and bewilderment, he is said to have a vision of Ramananda himself who told him that Sahajananda was the Supreme Being Himself and that he should, therefore, set his mind at rest in regard to what was happening. At this Muktananda was cheered, he gathered together flowers from the meadow, made a garland thereof, and reaching home offered worship to Swami Sahajananda as the Supreme.

Whatever be the exact nature of this Samadhi and whatever the character of the visions that were seen in it, there is not the least doubt that there was such a phenomenon as this reproduced on a large scale in this Satsang. It was probably this that gave a new turn to the movement, and made the predominance of the youthful leader complete. That Muktananda and many others from among the disciples of Ramananda subordinated themselves to Sahajananda all their life, and looked upon him as much greater than their late master, presupposes the manifestation of divine power in this and other ways. As we shall see further on, this was but a beginning of such manifestations, and it was only one, and a minor aspect of his manifold personality. Our advance in the study of his life will show us that this Trance Chapter recedes more and more, and although we hear of men and women going into trance all through his life, the mention of such cases later on is occasional.

It is also necessary to say here that neither Swami Sahajananda himself nor his great disciples placed any extraordinary moral and spiritual value on these trances. In the scale of values of the Satsang, there are many things which are ranked far higher than this Samadhi. Men and women who have had these experiences are not considered in any way holier than or superior to others, and the greatest among the disciples, the holiest and the best of them, Swamis Muktananda and Gopalananda, never had this kind of experience. As a matter of fact Swami Sahajananda is reported to have said that one of his defects or faults was that he never gave this Samadhi to these two men.

We shall give here the theory of this Samadhi as it was given by Swami Sahajananda more than twenty years after these events which we have been mentioning here took place. To the question as to why this Samadhi took place he said :

When God incarnates Himself in this Bharatkhandā (the Indian continent) for the salvation of souls, He comes either as a King in which condition he has thirty-nine qualities, and when He comes as a Sadhu\* (like Datta and Kapil) he has thirty qualities. The Incarnate God looks exactly like other men, but He is divine and as such different from other men, just as there are stones and magnet-stones, both of which look alike but are very different in their properties. The quality in the latter is that when a ship goes in the direction of a mountain made of

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\*This corresponds to the Prophet-type of the Messiah according to the Jewish and Christian belief.



## *Sri Swami Narayana*

such stone, all its nails are drawn out by the force of magnetism of that mountain. In the same way, when human beings look upon the Incarnate God, their senses are drawn away from them, and they enter into Samadhi. It was in this way that the people of Gokul were led into trance on seeing Shri Krishna, and God showed them His own abode. In the same way at whatever time God incarnates Himself, there is always this miraculous power in His Person, viz., that whosoever sees Him with faith, his senses are drawn away from him and he enters into Samadhi. Moreover sometimes when God wants to lead many souls to salvation, such Samadhi comes to unbelievers and even animals, and so it is no wonder if the believers have it.\*

This authoritative explanation given as late as 1882 Samvat witnesses to the fact of the Samadhi taking place even then. As a matter of fact there was a remarkable case of such Samadhi at that time, and it was that which had led to this question being asked. It is this:

There was a Brahmin who had committed some heinous crime both against the moral as well as the social order, with the result that he was ostracized by all people and had to live apart from human habitation. While in this condition, he once gave shelter and protection to some of the Sadhus of this Satsang who were beaten severely by some people. The Sadhus promised him salvation if he would repent and believe, but he told them that he was too sinful to be saved. Upon this the Sadhus asked him to come and see their leader Swami Brahmananda, who was at that time supervising the building of the great temple at Vartal. The man promised to do so and some days later he came. At that time Brahmananda was engaged in driving

\*Vachanamrit : Vartal division No. 13.

the bullocks of the mill preparing mortar, while in one hand he had a MS. of his own which he was reading. The man was introduced to him by those Sadhus whom he had helped, and when he told Swami Brahmananda how sinful he was, the latter told him that his sins were forgiven when he gave shelter to the Sadhus, and that if he believed in Swami Sahajananda and the Satsang, he would be saved. This the man did and soon fell in a trance. All these incidents created a great sensation among the people in the neighbourhood who had believed the Brahmin to be beyond redemption, and who were therefore scandalized at what had happened to him.

This was the origin of the question and answer given above. In reply to the further question as to why sinners had this Samadhi, Swami Sahajananda said:

If any man does not follow the law of Varnashrama\*, as given in the Scriptures, people believe that he is a sinner. But if such a man thinks well of God or His saints, it is righteousness for him, and whatever may have been counted as sin against him because of his breaking the laws of Varnashrama is remitted, and such a person becomes extremely holy. His mind fixes itself on God and he gets Samadhi. As for the man who follows the laws of Varnashrama, it is true all people take him to be righteous, but if he thinks ill of God or His saints, the sin of this is so great that it destroys all his so-called righteousness. Therefore, the man who offends God's saints is the worst of sinners, because one can be free from even mortal sins if one surrenders himself to God or His saints... ..Therefore, those whom the world calls sinners are not necessarily sinners, nor are those righteous whom it calls righteous.

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\*Rules and regulations imposed by the caste-system or the Hindu Social Order.

We have, however, another story belonging to this early period which throws a great deal of light on the activities of Swami Sahajananda in these days, and which shows the great power and authority he had already come to possess. The story is all the more important because it gives us the year in which the events mentioned in it took place, and belongs to a collection of two hundred stories related by a man belonging to the very place where the incidents mentioned in this particular story took place. This story has all the greater value because it is the only one of its kind in the collection so far as the period relating to this Samadhi chapter is concerned, a chapter which it mentions only incidentally. In the eyes of the present writer it is unique inasmuch as it has all the marks of verisimilitude, throws a flood of light on this period, and confirms many other stories of this period, extraordinary and wonderful as they are. This is how it stands:

Once in the year Samvat 1859 (1802-3 A. D.) Shrijee Maharaj was in Kariani. From there, Muljee Sheth brought him to Memka. There were in Memka at this time four followers of the Master, viz., Muljee Sheth, carpenter Hansraj, farmer Shamo Agolo and farmer Shamo Kangsagro. The rest of the people were in darkness (Avidya). In those days, the Samadhi chapter was going on in full force. So much so was this the case that whosoever came to the Maharaj was thrown into Samadhi, and as people were afraid of this they did not come to the Maharaj. Whoever came was thrown into Samadhi, and there were all the time ten or twenty men heaped together, and when they returned to their ordinary consciousness, they would talk

of the various Abodes and Mansions of God. The Maharaj at that time lived on Bajri bread, chillies, and senna. This was the chapter in those days, and the Maharaj had with him about seven or eight men including Swami Muktananda, Bhojabhai and Mancha Bhakta. Men like Swamis Purnananda, Swarupananda, Naronarayanananda, Adabhutananda were farmers in villages such as Mithan, Rangara etc., which were close by. They also saw the Maharaj for the first time in Memka. The Maharaj stayed here for three days and left, and with him went the four followers of this place for about two miles to see him off. At the time of parting, the Maharaj asked them if they would obey him in regard to one matter. On their replying in the positive, he said : " You all four should not live in this place and should leave it within twenty days with all your possessions." Then they said : " Where shall we go ? " To this he replied : " Go anywhere you like but stay here no more, and swear to this by holding my feet." They all did this and the Maharaj left. They all felt that since they had sworn to do this, they should all leave within the specified period. Eventually they got their things ready and left the place. Muljee Sheth went to Limbdee, Hansraj for Kholadiad, and the two farmers for Chanpur. They did this within a fortnight. On the twenty-first day Babajee came with an army of the Gaekwar of Baroda to fight with the chief of Wadhwan, his army encamped near Memka, and finding on inquiry that it belonged to Wadhwan they looted and burned the place, in consequence of which the people suffered heavily. Only these four people who had left the place were spared this calamity, and thus the Master protected them. \*

There is another account, much more realistic than others, belonging somewhere to this period, which

\*Story No. 26 in the collection " Stories concerning Shrijee Maharaj by Ramjee Sheth. "

shows what a strenuous life Swami Sahajananda himself lived and made others live. This is it :

\* In Lojpur, the Maharaj used to give alms in the shape of food to all who came for it. Both he and Swami Muktananda would go to the town putting on shorts and carrying a carrier (with two pails attached to it at two ends) to beg flour on alternate days. They would make loaves of this flour and would feed the pilgrims. If any disciples brought to them *ghee* (clarified butter), sugar etc., which were meant for them, they would give these things also to the pilgrims. After feeding the pilgrims, they would feed their own Sadhus and finishing their own meal last of all, they would clean and wash the kitchen. After this they would start their daily Katha\* which they would continue until two o'clock in the afternoon. In the evening they would have their ablutions, cooking, feeding of any new pilgrims that may have come, and then start their Katha which would last until about midnight. They all, then, would go to bed, and at two o'clock in the morning, Swami Sahajananda would get up, and awakening all of them would make them sit for meditation. He himself would walk round with a small cane to keep all awake, using the cane sometimes if anybody dozed or slept. This would last until four o'clock, when they would again start their work as on the day before. Thus those who were with him had little rest and less sleep, which made Swami Muktananda fear lest it might be impossible for many of the Sadhus to pull on long under such discipline. Such was his fiery and exacting nature at this time, but he gave it up in course of time and lived with all in great harmony.

The picture that is given here shows how earnestly he took his duty, and there are several similar stories

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\*Reading of the Scripture together with its exposition.

confirming the truth of what is said in the present one. As we shall see in the course of our narrative, he kept the rigour of this discipline for years; as a matter of fact it went on increasing for more than a decade, so much so that it would be difficult to find such self-imposed rigour of ascetic and spiritual life in the annals of religious history. The wonder is, however, that in spite of this the Satsang grew in numbers from the start and kept on growing all the time. This was due solely to the wonderful personality of the leader who could inspire such heroism in his followers and disciples as to make them bear all these hardships.

It would be a mistake to think, however, that this discipline and asceticism were the only things that the Satsang could show. This was only one aspect of his work, and at no time, the mystical, i. e. the spiritual as well as the practical aspects of religious life were neglected. Even from the time of Ramananda not only were love to God and love to men strictly enjoined upon all the disciples, but they found practical expression in acts of devotion and works of charity. Ramananda Swami had started several Sadavrits-almshouses-where alms in the shape of food, cooked or uncooked, were given to all who came for it. This is a well-known method of giving charity to poor people and is in vogue for centuries in India. The alms of which we read in the story narrated above were given in one such almshouse, and the place, Lojpur, being situated on the highway to Dwarka,

many pilgrims and other poor people naturally came to it for help.

Swami Sahajananda increased the range of these religio-social activities from the very beginning. In his very first tour after assuming office he came to a place called Mangrol where he got an old Vava ( a big well ) that had fallen long since into disuse repaired, and celebrated the occasion with great éclat. To build or repair wells or tanks in countries where water is scarce for a large part of the year is rightly considered an act of great merit, and to do this is real charity to men and animals. It was during the course of these festivities in connection with the opening of this well for public use that Swami Sahajananda is said to have manifested himself as the four-armed Supreme Being, and it was also here that he is said to have opened the Samadhi Chapter.

With all this and much more Swami Sahajananda was revitalizing the movement and making great headway on every side. The manifestation of so much power could not but attract many people to him, and several became disciples. Some of his greatest followers, men who achieved much in course of time, came to him during these first years of his ministry, and there was something remarkable in the way each came. We shall give here an example of one who became a Sadhu only two years after Sahajananda began his ministry, and who came to be one of the foremost

poets and writers of the Satsang. His conversion is all the more remarkable in as much as he was a disciple of Swami Ramananda and was fifteen years older than his new Master. The spiritual conversion that he now had fructified in a life of rich and varied service, and in the creation of a large body of literature which is as fine as any produced in the movement, and which would have a high place in the religious literature of any movement. The story is this:

This man's name was Laljee and he was a carpenter by caste and profession. He seems to have been spiritually minded from his early youth, and was a devoted disciple of Ramananda, so much so that he was at first disposed to be jealous of the rising fame of Sahajananda. He, however, got reconciled to the latter's growing influence, and took a very active part when Sahajananda celebrated the spring festival in Samvat 1860 ( A. D. 1804 ) at his place called Shekhpatt. From here Swami Sahajananda wanted to go to Cutch, the province adjacent to Kathiawad, and so he asked Laljee to find some reliable guide for him. Thinking that this would be a great opportunity for him to be with Sahajananda, he offered himself for the purpose. The way to this province was a dreary one as it lay through a desert, there was neither food nor drink to be had on the way, and moreover it was an unfrequented one and so there was great fear of robbers etc. On account of this, Laljee took provisions and a bag of water, and took some silver coins which he put in his shoes. In this way they two started on their journey. They had not gone very far when they came across a beggar, and Swami Sahajananda made Laljee give him all the food that they had. A little later they came across a band of robbers who searched their persons, and



not finding anything worth while were about to leave them when Swami Sahajananda told them that they did not know how to rob and search, and pointed out the money hidden in the shoes of Laljee. The robbers took this and went away. What water was left to them was given away to some one else. Then Laljee became very thirsty and was about to faint when the Master told him that at times fresh water was found in the midst of the desert which they were crossing, and pointing out to him some water asked him to drink it. Laljee did this and found it fresh which was quite unusual, as the water in that desert is saltish. They crossed the desert with much difficulty, and finding a tree and some shade they took rest and Swami Sahajananda went to sleep. At this time Laljee took the Master's feet which were swollen in his hands, desiring to take out the many thorns that were in them. This made him see for the first time the sixteen signs which are said to exist in the soles of the feet of one who is God Incarnate. They then reached a place called Adhoi, where Sahajananda became very hungry, and he asked Laljee to get him some food. To this Laljee replied that he did not know what to do since he (the Master) had caused him to give away both their provisions and the money they had with them. Then Swami Sahajananda asked him to go and beg for some food in the village, to which the latter objected saying that he was known in the place. The Master then said to him that he would so change him that he would not be known by any one; and saying this he cut off his moustache and the tuft of hair on his head, made him put on one of his own Sadhu robes, called him Nishkulananda and sent him to the village. On his return they both took their meal, and then Swami Sahajananda reminded him of the promise that was made to him by Swami Ramananda that he would call him out of the world when he needed him, and said that the time was

now come for the fulfillment of that promise. To this Laljee gave his consent and turned his back on the world for good.

It may be mentioned here that Laljee had a wife and two children, and that he was a man of means and had flourishing business. He left everything in order to follow his Master, and during the forty-four years that he lived after this he wrote about two dozen important works, all in poetry and of high quality. One of these is a big biography of his Master, and it is rightly considered a classic in the literature of this body. He also used his talents as a carpenter in building and ornamenting some of the great temples of the Satsang, and beautiful work wrought by his hands in both stone and wood can be seen in many places.

His first work was written in this very year of his conversion (samvat 1860) at the instance of his Master who, knowing his talents as a poet, asked him to use them for such a purpose. The book is called "Yama-Danda" which may be translated as "the Judgment". The book has much value as a historical document, for it is the first one written in this Satsang, and as such it gives us an insight into the mind of Swami Sahajananda at this time. The book has twenty chapters and there are in it about eleven hundred verses. In the first part of it a picture is drawn of human life in this world apart from God, a life of great misery, and also of life in the next

world of such people who have not known God. It is a picture as dark as one could find, and the book would have little value if it ended only in that. But it is drawn as a warning to the people, and the book opens and ends with the ringing tones of the hope of freedom and salvation from all this misery and evil. The center of this hope is the Master who has manifested himself, and Swami Sahajananda is already spoken of here as the true Guru and also the Incarnate God. He is spoken of as the same as Shri Krishna, the greatest of Incarnations, and whosoever comes to him with faith and belief is saved from this Judgment and gets his salvation. This is not all. Even at this early stage of the ministry of Swami Narayana, he is said to come to his followers at the time of their leaving their body, alone or with some of his Sadhus, to take them with him to his heavenly abodes. He comes with his chariot or horse, and is sometimes seen in this condition by other people; he sometimes comes to them some days before they pass away, tells them that he will take them on a particular day, and fulfills his promise. This gives great confidence to those who are about to pass away; they wait for the day when they will go to Heaven with their Master most joyfully, and speak of their unique happiness to others. The author speaks with remarkable assurance that his Master is the Saviour, and that his followers are the only Satsang, the Holy and Good Fellowship, and all others are Kusang, i. e. the Evil Fellowship. The last chapter is a beautiful song of

thanksgiving and joy for the great salvation that he has got.

It is remarkable that all the great features of this Satsang, features some of which are unique, are found at this early stage of Swami Sahajananda's ministry. Hardly two years had passed since he had assumed the leadership when he is proclaimed as the Saviour and the very God of God by one who was much older than he, and who moreover was a disciple of Swami Ramananda, both of which facts would make it all the more difficult for him to accept Sahajananda as the Holy of Holies. Whatever other miracles may have been performed by this time by Sahajananda, the conversion of Swami Nishkulananda was as great a miracle as any other, and we find therein a manifestation of unique spiritual power.

We should also take notice of the fact that Swami Sahajananda wanted to press every faculty of his own and his followers into this supreme business of saving souls, and so he turned his attention to the creation of literature as soon as a suitable opportunity arose. We shall have occasion to see later on what progress was made in this direction in the life-time of Swami Sahajananda himself. What is remarkable is that although he himself did not have much of book learning, he, instead of neglecting it, encouraged it from these early days and gave it a high place in the Satsang. This was also a new departure in the body,

for there is no evidence that Swami Ramananda paid much attention to this kind of work.

While we are dealing with this early period, we might also give an account of the conversion of another great disciple of Swami Sahajananda. This is of one who came to be known as Swami Brahmananda, perhaps the foremost poet of the Satsang. His conversion, which took place in 1861 Samvat ( 1805 A. D. ), is all the more remarkable in as much as he was entirely a man of the world and was a stranger to this Satsang. He was a bard by profession, and because of his great poetic powers was a welcome guest at the courts of all the important Princes of Western India as far as Rajputana in the North. He was about ten years older than Sahajananda, and before he met the latter, he does not seem to have shown any special aptitude for religion. While he was on one of his periodical rounds, he came across Swami Sahajananda, and this is how he describes their first meeting in an extempore poem which he made then and there:

Blessed is this hour, blessed it is indeed;

I have seen Sahajananda, blessed is this hour.

Now no more can Lust or Anger or Covetousness trouble me.

The Master's Person has come and taken hold of my heart.

This is too great a thing to be known by human understanding;

It is found only by seeing the glance of the true Guru.  
I have wandered all these æons in the dark vale of  
millions of births and deaths,

But now that I am united with the Lord, all my misery  
is at an end,

With the key of knowledge given to me by my Guru,  
all the locks have been opened.

O, Ladu, seeing Sahajanand, thy eyes have found their desire.

It seems he became a Sadhu very soon after this, for we do not find another poem in the very large collection of his poems in which this name of his—"Ladu"—is used. He lived twenty-seven years after becoming a Sadhu surviving his Master by two years, and served the Satsang as a great poet and leader. He composed some thousands of songs, most of which are descriptions of his Master in various positions and actions, and they are inspired by an intense love of his Master in whom he sees the Deity living and working at all times. These are meant to inspire a similar love in the heart of all those who would hear them. There is one feature in regard to these which is worth mentioning. In only a few of them Sahajananda is mentioned by name; though the occasions inspiring most of these songs are from the life of the Master, these are associated with the name of Krishna. This is said to have been done in accordance with the desire of Swami Sahajananda himself.

There was another conversion as remarkable as any of these about the same time, an account of which also might well find a place here for the picture it gives to us of some of the religious conditions of the

times, and as a testimony to the great power of this youthful leader. It is as follows:—

There was a Brahmin from the South called Magniram who left home early to seek God, but who was deflected from this great object to one of securing occult powers. This he did by worshipping the goddess Kali in Bengal. So great were his powers that he succeeded in securing a good following of like-minded Sadhus, and went about from place to place and province to province with a troop of these semi-military Sadhus, striking fear in the heart of all and sundry and taking some sort of religious tribute from all religious and secular bodies. Such men and groups were a part of the religious life of those days, and people, partly out of fear of their military state, bore whatever burdens they chose to lay on them. In course of time Magniram came to Kathiawad, and on his return from Dwarka went to Mangrol to find out what truth there was in the stories he had heard of this rising Teacher. His chief aim in going to this place was to add a feather to his cap by exacting a tribute from him. He came thus to Swami Sahajananda and asked him to pay a certain tribute. This the latter refused to do, whereupon Magniram threatened him with dire consequences from the wrath of the Goddess whose favour he had won. As Sahajananda was not affected by this threat in the least, Magniram went back to his camp, and called the goddess who, on coming, told him that neither he nor she could do anything against Sahajananda. Then Magniram came to Swami Sahajananda the next morning, and in order to make amends for what he had done the previous day by way of giving insults and threats, he began to clean the pots and vessels used by the Sadhus, and sweep the yard. When the day advanced and the Maharaj was holding his usual meeting, he went to him with great humility and fell at his feet offering worship. He also prayed

that he should be allowed to stay and serve the Master. Upon this the latter said to him that as he was a leader of a band of Sadhus, it would be difficult for him to be a humble Sadhu of the new faith. Magniram replied to this by saying that he was prepared to do anything the Swami desired. Then Swami Sahajananda asked him to get rid of his long hair and throw it in a place where the Sadhus were constantly going about so that they might tread upon what was the symbol of his pride. This Magniram willingly did, and a little later he was ordained as a Sadhu and the name Advaitananda was given to him. Some of his disciples also followed him in this new life of his.

This is not the only instance of a leader of a group or of a monastic house leaving everything to follow Sahajananda. But what was more common was the renunciation of their particular sect or body on the part of some of the most promising disciples of various religious movements to join this new Teacher. To these his attraction was irresistible, and they threw their lot with him. Many parents also lost their sons, and wives their husbands. All this could not but create a great stir and raise in course of time a strong opposition against Sahajananda and his work. Thus this new movement of spiritual life soon met with persecution, and great persecution at that, and it gave to the body a new turn making it more spiritual and thereby achieving greater results than before. For nearly fifteen years the movement suffered from persecutions from bodies both religious and secular, all of which grew jealous of its greater holiness and success. So great was its power, however, that it triumphed over all these, and became in course of time the chief spiritual force among the Gujrati-speaking people.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Persecutions**

The first attack on the new movement came from different ascetic bodies which became extremely jealous of the growing success of Sahajananda's work. They wanted to destroy this work, and so they swarmed in large numbers to the various almshouses conducted by the Satsang from the time of Swami Ramananda. Not only did they come in numbers too large to be looked after, but they began to give trouble of various kinds, including even the act of looting them. In those days there was neither any central authority nor any local police protection to check such lawlessness, and whatever little order there may have been in the various innumerable small states and principalities was hardly enough for this purpose. Moreover it was a common practice on the part of Hindu princes not to interfere in matters of dispute between various religious bodies. They used to say that it was not their business to meddle when cows fought with one another. Owing to this, it became difficult, nay, impossible to manage these almshouses, and so they were closed.

This is the cause assigned for the close of this kind of activity on the part of the Satsang in the literature of the body. It is quite possible, however, that there may be another cause for it also. It may very well be that the almshouses were having a bad moral effect on those Sadhus of the Satsang who

were managing them. The fact that they were dispensers of charity to others might easily make them indolent, supercilious, and avaricious. It might make them too busy with the things of this world. Sahajananda was the last person to tolerate this, for he had set a very high ideal of Sadhu-life before himself and others from the beginning, and had proposed reforms in the life of the Sadhus even in those days when he was serving his apprenticeship under Swami Muktananda. He perhaps thought that these houses were stumbling-blocks in the way of the Sadhus, not to mention others, and therefore he was not sorry to close them when an opportunity to do so came so unsought.

This was not all. The jealousy and the enmity of these ascetic bodies knew no bounds. The very presence of this Satsang in their midst was an open and distinct reproach to their lives. Their life presented a complete contrast to that of these Sadhus. They were covetous and vicious in their habits, and were addicted to all sorts of vices and evil habits. They were a pest to the Society and were tolerated only because the people had known nothing better. They pandered to the worst superstitions of the people, and thus tyrannized over their minds. They carried arms, kept women, used foul language, went about in roving bands exacting tribute from people, fought with one another and sold their services at times to different princes thus taking part in military warfare. It was no wonder then that these people, whose very bread was at stake owing to the work of this stripling of a Teacher, should not take this challenge lying down.

These men, therefore, began to persecute the Sadhus wherever they found them. They ridiculed them, abused them and beat them mercilessly. They robbed them of their belongings few as these were, and what was far worse, of their images, cut their sacred thread and tuft of hair, thus making it impossible for them to offer their daily worship. To do this was essential for them before they took their food, and because of this they had to go without food at times for days. All this and much more the Sadhus bore without the least retaliation or resistance, and with all meekness and humility. They cheerfully forgave their enemies and even rejoiced in their persecutions. There are some very interesting stories told of the remarkable behaviour which they showed under all such treatment, and one or two might well be given here.

Once upon a time Swami Brahmananda was going about with a company of Sadhus "giving talks on God" to use the phrase in vogue amongst them, when they came across a troop of some of these people who began to beat them mercilessly. While this was being done, one of the persecutors put his sword on the ground, whereupon Brahmananda said to him that he should not leave his sword in this way, especially as some of these Sadhus had only recently come from the military classes, and seeing the sword they might be tempted to take possession of it and retaliate. He also added that this would result in serious harm to the persecuting party, and it would mean a violation of the vow of the Sadhu.

Here is another:

Another time Muktananda and Brahmananda were going to some place. On their way they met one of these

people who bound them and shut them up in a lonely place. After he had done this he began to sharpen his knife saying that he would cut the ears and nose of these Sadhus. Brahmananda was a bit perturbed about the impending loss of these members of his body, but Swami Muktananda was as peaceful as ever, and he comforted Brahmananda saying that whereas in their past lives they must have lost their ears and nose many a time for evil deeds, they had now got an opportunity to do so for the sake of God. Then they began singing hymns, hearing which some passer-by was attracted, and he asked the man what he was doing where-upon he told him of his purpose. At this the new-comer got angry with him and released the two Swamis.

One more :

Once upon a time one of these Sadhus was very seriously beaten by an ascetic who broke his heavy stick in the act. Somebody released him from the grip of the ascetic, and asked him whether he was very much hurt. To this the Sadhu replied : " No, I am not hurt; this body has been hurt a little, but that does not matter. I am sorry, however, that this fellow-ascetic of mine has got his stick broken. "

In one place Swami Sahajananda and some of his disciples were attacked with the result that one of them, a man called Muljee, was killed. There are several stories of attempts made on the life of the great leader by both religious and secular powers of those days. If his enemies never succeeded in any of these attempts at killing, hurting or imprisoning him, it was chiefly because of the fact that he came to be surrounded from the early part of his career as the Acharya by a military class of people called the Kathis, the people from whom the province has got its name Kathiawad.

He made a large number of these people his disciples, he made his headquarters in the home of one of them, and some of these Kathis were with him always as his guards wherever he went.

So great was the opposition to and the persecution of the Sadhus by these different kinds of ascetic bodies that it became impossible for them to carry on their work. Wherever the Sadhus went, they faced trouble and often of a serious kind. They were Vaishnava Sadhus and so observed the caste rules in matters of eating and drinking. Under these circumstances it was very easy to harass them without having recourse to such things as beating or whipping. All that was necessary was to contaminate their food and drink with the touch of some one belonging to a lower caste, or with some unclean thing such as meat etc. All this and much more was done. Some of the Sadhus were robbed of their images which was harder, as has been said before. To the Western reader the hardship that this entailed could only be understood by remembering that these images were to these men what a crucifix is to a Roman Catholic priest. Worship of these images was as obligatory upon them as is the celebration of the Mass to the Catholic priest, and these Sadhus could take their food only after they had offered it to the image. That they were thus debarred from their daily worship was the greatest of hardships.

Such an evil required a drastic remedy, and Swami Sahajananda, young as he was, rose equal to the occasion. Undaunted in the least by all this op-

position, he released new forces of spiritual life and went on conquering and adding new realms to his kingdom. Ramananda Swami is reported to have prophesied about him among other things this also, that when the chief actor in the drama came, the very stepping of his horse would be enough to grind all sects and beliefs to powder, and to winnow it away like the cotton of swallowwort.\* This was literally true, and perhaps in nothing else the prophecy was fulfilled to such an extent as in the step he took at this time. It was as great an innovation as was made by any Teacher or Reformer, and the fact that he was able to make it at this early stage, the way he did it and the extent of its scope, all this makes it a great moral miracle of religious history.

What he did was this. He called together all the Sadhus, who are said to have been about five hundred in number, to a place called Kalwani, and gave them a higher ordination than they had yet received. This was nothing less than the creation in the movement of a new order of Sadhus called that of the Paramhansas. It was conferring on these Sadhus a new status, a higher but a far more difficult one, so that while Sadhus and Sanuyasis can be counted by the hundred in India, Paramhansas can be counted only on one's fingers. The step that Saha-

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\*This is a plant found all over in India and in many parts of the world. It produces a kind of cotton which is extremely soft. It is found in very small quantities, and only very rich people sometimes use it to make pillows with.

## *Sri Swami Narayana*

Jananda now took could be compared to something like what Jesus did when he made his closest disciples, who were evangelists already, apostles. At one stroke he made hundreds of these men give up their caste and whatever else was symbolic of their social and religious position. Even the people belonging to the lowest caste, i. e. the Shudras, were made Paramhansas, and thus the Sadhus of all the four castes ate and drank together. This was as difficult a piece of work as any, for usually it is the people who have given up much who find it most difficult to give up what little is left to them. They dig their last trenches round this and will fight for it with their lives.

Not only did these renounce their caste, but they gave up their status as Sadhus also. Their vestments as Sadhus, the sign on the forehead which was their distinguishing sect-mark, the tuft of hair on the head which was the mark of distinction as Hindus, their rosary etc. all these they had to renounce. They could no more appear before the public and claim anything as Sadhus. It was the essence of their vow as Paramhansas to live in the spirit and mortify their flesh as much as possible. Whatever preaching work they did now, and they did as much and even more than they did before, was more or less secret, for it was a part of their vow or special command of their Master that they should not have any outward distinguishing mark so as to offer themselves an easy prey to their enemies. Thus while they were saved to a certain extent from the persecutions of other sects, they

correspondingly lost the sympathy and support of ordinary people which they would usually receive as Sadhus. It might be added here that their new position made their life all the more difficult in the eyes of the people, for whereas a man would be accepted in India as a Sadhu easily, the Paramhansa will have to prove himself to be true only by not caring to be accepted by others. It was not enough that they were called Paramhansas by their Master or by one another. People would not accept them as such because of this fact. On the other hand, they would be lowered in their estimation because of giving up their caste.

They were also expected to give up their images which it was necessary for them to keep as Sadhus. This was a part of their vow. They were to live as spirits, and offer their worship to God in spirit. In their own language their worship was to be "mental" henceforth, and their Master taught them how to do this.

All this was as radical a programme as could be imagined, and that Swami Sahajananda should have succeeded in persuading or commanding some hundreds of these Sadhus to do all this in one night, shows the marvellous hold he had upon them. They had to shed all their marks of caste, sect and status, marks which could not but have been extremely dear to them, which in fact were their all, and appear in an entirely new role before themselves and the world. It was an extraordinary spiritual venture, a veritable taking up of the cross, and they did this solely because of their faith in their Master. The change was a moral and spi-



ritual one, and the outward was only a symbol of the inner change. Their names also were changed, and these together form a collection of some of the most beautiful names that were ever given by a religious teacher to his followers. All these names have this peculiarity, that they all end with 'Ananda', i. e. joy, which signifies that they were supposed to live in the Spirit alone.

It may be added here that this was an interim arrangement. It was meant to meet a particular situation that had arisen. It is doubtful how far Swami Sahajananda had in his mind the idea of making this order of Paramhansas a permanent one. In some of the literature of the movement it is said that at the time when he ordained them as Paramhansas, he told them that very soon a great political power would come and establish itself in their midst, and added that then it would be easy for them to preach their faith and gospel more openly and under easier circumstances. Apart from this, the fact is that as soon as the British were well established in this part of the country, he ceased to ordain them as Paramhansas any more, and made the movement conform to orthodox standards. He positively forbade the new Sadhus to give up caste any more, following in this the older Vaishnava practice. This was, therefore, an interim arrangement with an interim ethic, and must be looked upon as such. In the Satsang, it corresponds to the institution of Apostles by Jesus, though in one way what the Sadhus did now was something more like what St.

Paul did when he differed from the older apostles and dined with the Gentiles. Like the Apostles in the Christian Church, these Paramhansas have a unique place in the movement and it was due to their labours and sacrifices, albeit inspired by their great Master, that the Satsang was able to grow and develop to the extent it did.

We shall now cast a glance upon the way these Sadhus lived and worked. There are several stories in which a picture of their life is drawn, and we shall reproduce here one or two to show what tribulations and trials they underwent for the cause they had espoused. Here is one of them:

Thus the Maharaj ordered one hundred and fifty Sadhus to proceed to Ahmedabad while he himself went to Bhuj (in Cutch) via Dhorajee. The Sadhus on reaching Ahmedabad put up at a place called the Dome of Darya-khan. While the Sadhus were singing the praises of God at night, there came to them a legion of ghosts, and these said to the Sadhus: 'You have taken possession of our abode, and so where shall we go now?' Saying this they began to cry, and so Swami Anandananda had pity on them. He took some water from his pot, and sprinkling them with it said: 'You all go to Badrikashram.\*' They all went there because of his word. This Anandananda Swami was no other than Ramgaloldas who was the head of a place called by his name in Cutch. He came to Kathiawad on a pilgrimage to Dwarka with his followers, and met the Maharaj on his way back in a place called Manavadar. While there he saw the glory and miraculous

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\* This place would serve as a Purgatory where being purified they would ultimately go to Heaven.

power of the Maharaj, and knowing him to be the Supreme Incarnation and Perfect God, remained with him leaving his followers. He was later on made a Sadhu, and the name, Anandananda, was given to him. Hearing his word all the ghosts went to Badrikashram. Such is the wonderful power of those who are the Sadhus of Sahajananda: what wonder, then, is it if he has infinitely more?

It was in this dome that the Sadhus along with Swami Muktananda lived. When they went to beg their food in the city, some people would put in their cloth food and some would put in even dust and things uneatable such as meat etc. All this they would take to the river, and after cleaning and washing it they would eat whatsoever was eatable, each getting hardly two or four ounces of food, and after drinking water at the river, they would return to the dome and say their prayers. They used to go to the city in this manner every day, when once the Sadhus got burns on the soles of their feet. Because of this the Maharaj had blisters on his feet in far-off Bhuj; in this way he showed his oneness with his disciples. The Sadhus lived in this way for about a month and a half in Ahmedabad. During this period some day they would get a quarter of a pound of food or even less for each, and because their food was sometimes mixed up with such things as meat etc., making it thus uneatable, they wrote to the Maharaj requesting him for permission to give up food altogether while they were there. The Maharaj replied to them in this way: "You must have eaten such things in your past lives many a time, and He Who is able to forgive your past sins is able to do the same this time also. So, oh ye great-souled ones, under no circumstances give up food. We want to do great things through you." On reading this letter they all were very much pleased.

After this one day a rich man died in the city, and a large party numbering more than a thousand attended the cremation. Some of them stayed at the cremation ground, while others came to our dome and sat by the Sadhus. These began to ask questions of the Sadhus and then said: "You are not Brahma; we are Brahma."\* While Muktananda was answering their questions, they said "We are the true Brahma." At this moment there fell a big snake in the midst of the meeting from the tamarind tree overhead. Seeing this all these "true Brahmas" fled knocking one another down in confusion, and stood at a distance. As for the snake, after regaining consciousness from the numbing effects of the fall, it began to move and came to the place where the Sadhus were. In these days the Sadhus were commanded not to move from a place because of fear of snakes or scorpions or tigers etc. I, Adbhutananda, the writer of this, say that the snake came and passed over my crossed legs, and then over an arm of one, a leg of another, a thigh of a third, etc., and after he had passed over the body of several in this way, it wound

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\* These men were holding or at least pretended to hold the Vedantic belief of the identity of the soul with the Over-soul. They spoke in this way because they saw at once that these Sadhus were not of this belief. This kind of Monism known as Vedant was very fashionable at this time among the cultured classes, and it has always been so more or less. Under cover of it a good deal of scepticism can masquerade as genuine philosophy and even religion, and this is why it is so much in vogue. What Scepticism has been in Europe and America, Vedant of a kind - Shuska Vedant, i.e. dry or merely intellectual Vedant - has been in India. It is in vogue among the intellectual and cultured classes, and so the foreigners such as missionaries etc. think it to be the prevailing doctrine in India. This is not true.

itself round the neck of Swami Sachhidananda, and placed its hood over his head. All this while he was repeating the name of Swami Narayana, and the snake seemed to hear and enjoy it as if it were the sound of a flute. It kept on waving its hood for some time and then leaving him went up the tree again. Seeing all this, the people who were standing at a distance—those who had spoken of themselves as true Brahmas and of the Sadhus as false ones—came near, and bowing down to them said: "You are the true ones and we are the false ones; please show us the way we can serve you with food." To this Muktananda replied, "Whosoever will bring his alms first, shall have his gift accepted by us". Seeing this miracle of fearlessness and patience, and the fact that the snake did not bite any of the Sadhus, many people became real Satsangis, and some of them brought food in the early morning and fed the Sadhus.

In this way we all lived in the grove of the tamarind trees, and we had enough food for about fifteen days. Then all the Sadhus went to Jetalpur for the great Yagna, i. e. Sacrifice. Two of the Sadhus did not follow the injunctions of the Maharaj and so they left. We followed and so we are still in the Satsang.

We shall add one more picture from the pen of the same author who evidently was an eye-witness and participator in this event as in the previous one to show the kind of life these Sadhus lived.

Once two hundred and fifty Sadhus were sent to Jamnagar\*. These had put up outside the town. When they

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\* This is one of the principal towns in Kathiawad. It is there that the famous "Ranjee" ruled for many years in our own times.

went out abegging, people would give them flour of Jowar, \* millet cakes, *khichri* etc. All this they took to the river to clean it, and after mixing the whole lot together and making it into balls they would eat the stuff. Even of this they hardly got an eighth or quarter of a pound. After finishing their meal they would come to their lodging place, and engage themselves in prayer etc. Once some people from the town came to them and asked them if there was anybody among them like Krishna. The head of the company replied: 'Look! all these are like Krishna.' .....After some time a letter was sent to Swami Sahajananda by this company to the effect that they did not know what to do as they did not get enough to eat, and the Master replied as follows:

"There came a true Teacher in a particular place. To him one man took daily a pound of rice on which that Teacher lived. To this Teacher there came a true seeker in course of time, and finding him to be of the right kind, he expressed his desire to stay with him. Thereupon the Teacher told him of the difficulty he had in regard to food. The seeker knowing now how the teacher lived replied that he would live upon the wash of the vessel in which the rice was cooked, but would not leave him. Then came another seeker who offered to live upon the wash of the rice before cooking. A third seeker came and he lived on the wash of the vessel in which the Teacher took his food. Compared to the difficulties of these men, what are yours?"

On the receipt of this letter they were very much pleased. After this one day a young Sadhu who had come

\* These are rough kinds of food, and are as unmixable with one another as could be imagined.

from Tailang\* country asked the superior if they might mix with their food some over-ripe radish leaves which were left in a pond close to their place by the vegetable sellers when they washed and cleaned their radishes for sale. This was allowed. A little later one of the Sadhus asked for permission to lick up the soft moss of the pond, and this also was granted. They lived upon this for four days, and on the fifth day while they were seated on the bank of the river engaged in talking to each other on religious subjects, the Ruler of the place passing by asked what sect these Sadhus belonged to. On coming to know who they were, he asked them how they lived, and when they told him that they lived by begging, he said that it was not possible for them to have enough food in that way. Then he asked his servant to invite them next morning for meal at the palace. To this the Superior replied: 'We are forbidden to accept such an invitation.' Whereupon the servant said that they should not refuse to accept the invitation of so great a Prince. To this the reply at once came forth: 'If we have to leave this place for not accepting the invitation, we are prepared to do so, but we cannot come.' The Ruler being told all this said that the Sadhus should have their own way, and added that some way should be found whereby they might receive his alms for his own spiritual benefit. The Superior replied to this that the Sadhus could receive nothing but what was given to them in their cloth. Then the Ruler got prepared good millet flour, *ghee* (clarified butter), sugar etc. etc., kept

\*This is in the extreme south of India. This shows that there were all sorts of nationalities represented among the Sadhus. And no wonder, for pilgrims from all parts of India have always flocked to Kathiawad, and some among them who were real seekers would naturally be drawn to a movement of this kind.

these things in several shops, and kept people at various gates of the town to take these Sadhus when they came for alms to these shops. This was done for six days, when the Superior said : ' Let us leave this place now; the town has come to know us, ' and they left the place.

It is no wonder that people such as these took the Kingdom of God by storm. Such men could not but shake the strongholds of evil and sin to their very foundations, and one can understand very well how other religious bodies would be extremely jealous of them, and also how all truly religiously-minded people would flock to them. Their own self-imposed austerities and sufferings were far greater than the sufferings they had from others, and their life during these years was one long continuous crucifixion of the flesh and the self. Under the inspiration of their Master, their life had become a marvel, and they also worked wonders. Their sole work was to talk to people of God and Salvation, and to lead them to their Teacher and Satsang, and apart from their teaching, their way of life, their holiness and devotion to God were sufficient to attract people to themselves. They met people only to talk to them of God, and because their words had life behind them, they lodged at once in the hearts of many. Hundreds and thousands of people became Satsangis, i. e. members of the Holy Fellowship, everywhere, and the body grew by leaps and bounds.

For one to be an ordinary disciple or Satsangi as he or she was called, it was necessary to take a



fivefold vow or rather five vows, viz., (1) not to steal; (2) not to commit adultery; (3) not to eat meat; (4) not to drink wine; (5) not to eat food from people belonging to a caste lower than that of oneself. This was, however, the merest beginning of discipleship. Once a man was in the Fellowship, he could not but be drawn more and more to the heart of it, and soon even laymen and laywomen came to be known for many more things than those mentioned above. It soon became an established convention that no Satsangi would take any intoxicating drink or drug, and would not even smoke. But his virtues were not merely negative; there was a great deal in his life which was positive. His devotion to God, his purity of character, his loyalty to his Fellowship, his sound common sense etc., were some of the noted characteristics of a Satsangi in those days.

As for the Sadhus or the Paramhansas, they also had five vows. They are vows as hard as one could imagine, and as time went there was a gradual relaxation of these. Swami Sahajananda made several changes in the way of life of these Sadhus, and each of these is called a Chapter. Of these there are as many as about a hundred, though most of them relate to small and minor changes. Some of these Chapters were promulgated by circular letters which were sent round, or at great Conventions which came to be held twice every year regularly. We might quote one of these letters here, a letter written in the year 1866 Samvat

( 1810 A. D. ), to show what an austere life was that of these Sadhus. It is a long one, but as it is full it helps us in getting a proper idea of the discipline of the Sadhus. This is it:—

To all the revered Paramhansas who abide in the word living in different places salutations from Swami Sahajana-  
nanda abiding in the spiritual world:

This is to tell you that the Vow of Non-desire is to renounce absolutely everything from one's heart. So far as the body is concerned, this vow means that one should not live in a roofed house at night. One should live at night and only for one night in some temple or place of worship outside the town, or in some grove or den or under the shade of a tree, taking care that there should be no woman, nor worldly talk going on in any of these places. No one should live in the same place the second night unless he be ill, and if he stays he should fast the next day. He should live alone at night, and if there are two or three Paramhansas they should remain together so long as they talk of religious matters. If they go to the town it should be only to talk of God to the people there, and only so long as people hear these things they should remain in the town. They should also go to the town to beg their food, but they should never expect anything in return from those to whom they may have talked of spiritual matters, and if they do, what they get in this way is dirt. What one gets without any expectation is like nectar. In the monsoon the Paramhansas should live together in one place. If all of them cannot be accomodated in one place for the purpose of hearing the Katha of the Bhagwata, they should live in groups of twenty, twenty-five, thirty, forty etc., in different places. They should hear the Bhagwata

or some other Scriptural book. They should beg their food only once, and if anything is left after they have eaten, they should feed dogs with it. They should not allow women to come to this meeting, and should avoid women in every way. After the monsoon they should again separate and each should go by himself. No one should use shoes or ride a horse or drive in a cart or carriage. No conveyance should be used. If someone gave any cloth, one might take it, but he should never beg for it. He may beg for an earthen pot or a gourd vessel or a wooden thing to hold water, and also a piece of cloth for filtering water. If he has no filter cloth, he should drink water after examining it carefully. He should not pluck even a leaf from a green tree or plant. While walking he should take care lest he crush any ant or creature. If he finds that the pond or river etc. where he wants to take his bath is full of animalcules of creatures, he should not bathe. While bathing he should not rub his body with his hands. He should keep all the five hairs (moustache, beard, hair on the head etc.) on his body. If by any chance he gets lice in his hair, he might allow some layman to remove them if he offered to do so on his own account, but he should not ask any one to do so. He must cover his organs with a piece of cloth and have a cloth-bag. If he has a robe, it is all right; if not, it does not matter. He should sleep on the ground, and should not spread any kind of bedding on it. He should not hear anything pertaining to the world, nor should talk about it. He should collect his inner self as much as possible, and renounce everything else. This is the vow of Non-desire which you all should keep in mind.

Now the vow of Non-lust. It is better not to see a woman, but if one sees a woman and has an evil thought in regard to her, he should fast on that day. If one touches a woman unintentionally, he should fast as a penance for

it. If one speaks to a woman or smiles at her unintentionally, or one stands where many women are gathered together talking and joking amongst themselves, he should fast one day for it. One should not hear a man and a woman talk with each other in love, nor should one see animals or birds or fishes when they are engaged in sexual intercourse, and if one sees them in this way and although he may not be affected by it in any way, he should fast that day. To conquer lust one should practise Siddhasana and subjugate the apana vayu, i. e. the wind that escapes by rectum. He should repeat the name 'Swami Narayana' in his mind continuously.\* If any sinful man has committed some sinful act with his body in connection with a woman, he has this for his punishment, viz., that he should put on nothing for a year but just a piece of cloth to hide his nakedness, and he should not live under any kind of shade; he should bear the heat of the summer, the water of the monsoon and the cold of the winter, and in this way he should move in the Satsang, and should take the name Swami Narayana.

Now the vow of Non-taste; One should take food from all the four castes, taking care, however, not to accept meat and fish. He is forbidden to use any kind of intoxicating drink or drug such as wine, opium, tobacco etc. Except these things he should take whatever is given to him, e. g. things bitter, pungent, sweet etc. Whatever is given to him in this way, he should mix up completely together. He should do this in his gourd-pot or on a clean stone or on the bank of a river or pond. If he cannot have any of these things, he should eat from his hands. He should not beg food nor eat it while sitting at a householder's place. He should mortify the sense of taste. He should deny whatever taste the tongue demands, and he who satis-

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\*As has been said before, this is the name of God which Swami Sahajananda gave his disciples to use for their worship.

fies the tastes of his tongue will not be able to keep any of these vows. One should think only of filling his stomach but have no desire for taste.

The vow of Non-covetousness. One should renounce the touch of all the eight metals, except that he may have a needle to sew his robe. One can keep books. If one requires paper to write on for the purpose of study, he should ask for it from some of the elders among laymen. This should be done by a group of Paramhansas together, and the group should give to the individual what paper or book he wants. If any Scripture is to be studied, it is the Shrimad Bhagwata, and any book by the poet Akha. One should keep a book if one know the meaning of it from beginning to end; otherwise not. One should not study any book in which the belief in the Personality of God and His Incarnations is refuted. God is Rama and Krishna, Atma-nanda,\* Ramanada, Sahajananda: consider all these Incarnations as one. All these are one with Narayana in Badrikashram. One should meditate on the Incarnate One, on the body of the Incarnate One from the tip of his toes to the top of his head, taking every member of the body one by one, and then the whole. One should realize this at first in his waking condition, and then by practice in the dreaming condition, and lastly he should realize this in the *Shushupti* condition. After this he should do it as the knower of this *Shushupti* condition. Then he should renounce himself as the observer: I am not: only God is. The world is not: only God is.

Vow of Non-pride: Rishabha Dev, Datatraya, Jada-bharata, Kadaraja, Shukdeva, Prahalada, Kapildeva, Deva-huti, all these have spoken on this and other subjects in Shrimad Bhagwata. Do take down what they have said.

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\*This was the teacher and Guru of Swami Ramananda.

Written on Samvat 1866, Bhadra, dark half, eleventh day, Thursday.

The names given in connection with the last vow are those of men who have shown remarkable patience, forbearance, humility and faithful devotion to God under extreme hardships, sufferings and persecutions. They are, moreover, the ideals of such life as these Paramhansas were supposed to lead, and it is as such that Swami Sahajananda places them before these Sadhus of his. This very fact coupled with the deep faith that the Sadhus had in their own teacher, made their life as positive as it could be in spite of all these negative injunctions. They were moving amongst a cloud of witnesses, devotees and *bhaktas* of all ages, and they felt their oneness with them. It was this divine company which made it possible for them to suffer such great hardships and carry on their work under so much persecution. It is no wonder if some of the Sadhus left under the strain of this kind of life, but the majority remained. They were made to pass through fire as it were, and much of the dross in them was burnt. When they had gone through all this severe discipline extending over more than a decade without failing or flinching, their Master is reported to have said with much sadness in his voice to them these words, "You have done much for me," and he asked Swami Muktananda to modify the severity of their life, which process took three years. During these years of hardship and suffering, however, they received a new

mind, and they began to look upon their Teacher in a new way.

Whatever it be, the ordination of some hundreds of men as Paramhansas and their life as such, a life lived under conditions of extreme hardships and sufferings, imposed from both within and without, together with the noble fruit that these bore in the shape of a rich harvest of souls—all this has but few parallels in the religious history of the world, and it constitutes one of the noblest chapters in the life of Swami Sahajananda and that of this Satsang.

## CHAPTER VII

### Some special activities

Within a short time since his installation as the Acharya, Swami Sahajananda succeeded in creating an order of Sadhus in accordance with the highest ideals of what is known as the Bhagwata Dharma. He had practised these ideals for years, alone as he was in this Sadhana—self-discipline—of his, and as soon as the opportunity came he made hundreds adopt them as their own. To create an apostolic order of this kind would be no small achievement at any time in any country, and it was especially difficult at this time when religion was at a very low ebb in Gujrat. It is doubtful if a band of such Sadhus existed in any part of India at that time. They would be rare at any time, and were so more than ever at the period we are treating of. The various bodies following the Bhagwata Dharma known as Vaishnava sects had also shared in the general degeneration, and some, if not all, of them were as bad as any. Swami Sahajananda lit a new fire in the midst of universal darkness, and this was bound to cast its light far and wide. His work was to revive and reform the Bhagwata Dharma at its highest, and he succeeded in laying its ground-plan in the shape of this apostolic band of Sadhus. He gathered these round himself as the center, and there was gathered round these the larger Fellowship called the Satsang.



The activities of Swami Sahajananda for the first few years of his ministry seem to be confined more or less to the creating of this order of Sadhus and the expansion of the Satsang by the simple means of preaching and teaching. That even this comparatively simple work was not done without much opposition and persecution we have already seen. But there were evils crying for remedy all around and Sahajananda was not one to sit in peace while so much was to be done. Thus an opportunity soon came to extend the operations of the spirit of reform that he had got within himself. This was a new and a greater challenge to the vested interests and powers that were there and it added to the opposition that had already been created against him. This new move was the performing of Yagnas, i.e. Sacrifices, and it came about in this way.

Once while Swami Sahajananda was in Bhuj in the province of Cutch, the Prime Minister there was performing a big sacrifice in which some animals were to be sacrificed. Such bloody sacrifices seem to be very common in those days all over India, and they were usually performed by the Princes or big people such as Ministers etc. To do this was considered a meritorious act, and not to do it was thought of as a sin of omission that might invite the wrath of gods on the kingdom or the people. The Brahmins took part in these, and hence the sacrifices got the sanction of the priestly class as well. Sometimes learned Brahmins came from far off places such as Benares etc. to take part in them, and therefore to protest

against such sacrifices was like throwing a challenge to the vested interests of both Princes and Brahmins not only within the bounds of Gujrat but even beyond. This Swami Sahajananda had the courage to do because of his firm belief that such sacrifices were no more needed in accordance with the best spirit of the Vedic Dharma itself, in the name of which they were said to be performed. He, therefore, protested against such a bloody sacrifice saying that it was against the spirit of the Vedas and as a result he had to enter into a serious controversy with the Brahmins assembled for the purpose.

The line of argument that he followed at this time in Bhuj and later on in other places in regard to this matter was this: the Vedas inculcated bloody sacrifices not for the sake of taking animal life, but to circumscribe the universal taking of such life by human beings by confining it only to these occasions with a view, however, to the complete abolition of it in course of time. He said that the Vedas at their highest taught Ahimsa (Non-violence) and that these bloody sacrifices were only a stage on the way to the complete realization of this principle. He even added that those who performed such sacrifices were acting against the teaching of the Shastras (Scriptures), and that they were no better than *malechhas*.\*

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\*This is a term used by the Hindus for those who do not know the Law of God. It is similar in its meaning to the term heathen as used by the Christians and Kafir by the Moslems. Originally these terms were meant to denote people who do not know God and have no law.

This was carrying the war into the enemy's camp, and it was no wonder that Sahajanauda made many enemies. He felt, however, that it was not enough to refute in private or public meetings the prevailing belief in regard to such sacrifices in order to abolish them, but that he should perform bloodless sacrifices to serve as an object lesson to the people. He felt that this was the only way in which he could wean at least the common people, if not the high priests and Princes, from a practice which was tantamount to sin in his eyes. At the back of all this was his great humanity towards the animals which were thus mercilessly sacrificed, and this again in the name of religion. The principle of Ahimsa was an integral part of the Bhagwata Dharma, and here was one who had incarnated that Dharma in himself.

With a view to carry on this reform he performed a bloodless sacrifice on a big scale in a place called Jetalpur. This place is situated near Ahmedabad, the chief city then as now of Gujrat, and therefore it was strategic for his purpose. Ahmedabad was then the headquarters of the Peshwa's Governor in Gujrat, and therefore to perform this sacrifice in the domains of the Peshwa and so near the seat of the government was to carry this war of reform into the very heart of the enemy's kingdom. What made matters worse was that the Peshwas were Brahmins of the bluest blood, and since they were the most important political power in India when the British came-(it was from them

that the British conquered India )—they thus united in themselves the prestige, power and arrogance of a class of people who were as high as any amongst the priestly order, and whose political power was a little short of the highest in the land. The Peshwa's representatives in Gujrat fully shared in the general corruption of manners and morals, and if anything they led the society on this downward path.

Conformable to all this degradation, there was prevalent at that time in Gujrat a type of religion which gave full latitude for the play of the baser instincts of man. The left-handed Shakti-Panth, known as Vama-Marga, was very much in vogue in the province, and probably it had its chief seat in Ahmedabad. It sanctioned meat-eating, wine-drinking and sexual licence; nay, it gave all this a sort of sacramental character so that to do these things was considered a meritorious act. The Brahmin aristocracy of Ahmedabad had much sympathy with this kind of belief and practice if they did not actually follow it, and the masses were but too willing to follow their example. There was, therefore, a great challenge thrown out to this Vama-Marga in the step that Swami Sahajananda now took, and it is no wonder that he made enemies of powers and principalities.

The first sacrifice seems to have been performed in the year 1864 Samvat ( 1808 A. D. ) and it seems to have been a great success. It was this that aroused the opposition to a greater extent than before, for

jealousy of the rising power of the new Teacher became an additional motive, and it fanned to flames all the enmity that a reform movement would evoke. Soon after this sacrifice the father of the Peshwa's Governor died, and the Brahmins persuaded the Governor that the death was due to this unauthorized sacrifice. There were also other rumors set afloat such as, e. g. Swami Sahajananda was not a Brahmin as was alleged but a Shudra, and that as such any sacrifice performed by him was far from pleasing to gods and was such as would invite their wrath.

The Suba (governor), hearing all this, became very angry with Swami Sahajananda, and wanted to punish him. He accordingly invited him in the guise of a well-wisher and friend to his court, and in the hall where they were to meet each other, he prepared a seat for him over an oil-tank in such a way that the moment he set his foot on it, he would tumble down headlong into the tank, and thus there would be an end of him. Swami Sahajananda came to know of this, and so instead of taking the seat he just pushed it with his stick and it fell into the tank. Being thus foiled in his attempt to destroy Swami Sahajananda and caught red-handed in his evil design, the Suba threw off all reserve, and asked him to leave the city immediately and not to come there again. On the latter's asking how long this ban was to last, the Suba replied "So long as the power of the Peshwa lasts in Ahmedabad." This is said to have taken place in Samvat 1865.

Within about a decade of this, the Peshwa's power was no more in Gujrat, the British having taken their place, and so naturally the followers of Swami Sahajananda looked upon this as a visitation of God upon the power of Peshwa for the treatment the Suba had given to Sahajananda.

The next great sacrifice was to be performed again at Jetalpur, and for this purpose preparations were made on a grand scale. Almost on the eve of the beginning of it, however, the Suba at Ahmedabad sent a body of men to arrest Swami Sahajananda. The latter was not at the place and so the Suba did not succeed in this attempt of his. Sahajananda sent all the materials immediately to a place near by called Dabhan in the British territory, and performed the sacrifice there.

The successful performance of these two big Yagnas in Gujrat and some more in other parts was a veritable triumph of the new movement and its principles in several ways. These sacrifices lasted several days and weeks during the course of which tens of thousands of people came from far and near to witness them as if that were a sort of pilgrimage, and hundreds of learned but poor Brahmins and others were fed for days together. All this tended to give a definite status to the Movement, and it served as an occasion to preach and propagate its principles to large bodies of people. In those days when there were no newspapers or printing presses, such gatherings were the only means to give wide publicity to movements of this kind. The

Yagnas themselves, because of their bloodless character, were a part of the propaganda of the new faith. These showed how the primitive Vedic faith now developed into the Bhagwata Dharma with its teaching of Theism and Ahimsa. The Shakti Panth, which was so powerful then and counted among its followers some of the most intellectual and influential people as well as a large part of the masses, received a real set-back by this, and the new faith found its course easier after the performance of these sacrifices.

Swami Sahajananda is reported to have performed several miracles in connection with these Yagnas, and these are mostly concerned with the supply of certain things which were urgently needed. For example, in one of these Sacrifices when ghee (clarified butter) was wanting for the purpose of making sweets for Brahmins, Swami Sahajananda, on being told about this, went about touching the empty pots of ghee with a stick saying that they were not altogether empty, and immediately ghee was found in them. At one of these Sacrifices some of the noted robbers of the neighbourhood came to steal away at night the horses of Swami Sahajananda and his party, when they saw the figure of Sahajananda by the side of every horse, which fact resulted in the conversion of some of their leaders. One of these, a man called Johan Pagi who is spoken of as a "mountain of sin" became a most devoted follower. His conversion was complete as is evident from some of the stories about him. We have given one of these elsewhere.

We make room for another story here which will recapture for us the atmosphere, though to a very small extent, of the happenings at these Sacrifices, and of the great love of Swami Sahajananda for people and sinners of all kinds:

Once Swami Narayana wanted to perform a Sacrifice at Jetalpur, and for this purpose he himself took a cartful of wheat from house to house, and gave two measures to every family for grinding it into flour. While he was going round in this way, he came to a house where lived a prostitute. This woman was standing on the doorstep, and seeing Swami Narayana, she said to him: 'Sir, are you giving this wheat for grinding it into flour?' To this the Master said: 'Yes', whereupon she asked him what wage he gave for this work. The Master replied: 'I do not give wages in money, but give my blessings in return for this labour.' The woman said: 'Will you give me your blessing if I grind this wheat?' To this he replied: 'Yes, if you do it with your own hands.' Then she said: 'Give me, Sir, my share.' Then the Master gave her two measures (about sixty pounds in weight), which the woman ground at night and brought a whole basketful of flour the next day to the Master. She then asked him if he would give her his blessing. The Master asked her whether she herself had ground the wheat, and on her replying in the positive, the Master said: 'Show me your hands.' She showed them and they were full of sores. Then the Master said: 'I shall bless thee as much as I do these Sadhus.'

Along with these Sacrifices, Swami Sahajananda sometimes carried on another piece of work which was of great social service to the people. In these places where had gathered together most of the Sadhus for a season, he would engage them and others in digging



new tanks or repairing old ones which had gone out of use. Thus very often two important activities were going on simultaneously, and the social character of the new gospel was emphasized. The Sacrifices themselves were religious as well as social acts, and so while these with their allied activities trained the Sadhus into a life of social service as an integral part of their religious life, the generality of people were receiving a deep religious education through these works. Swami Sahajananda had laid a deep foundation in the creation of the order of Paramhansas, and now he had begun to build a Temple of Spirits—his Satsang—thereupon, a Temple which was to be as great as the foundation was deep.

The period during which these Sacrifices were performed as an activity of much significance does not seem to have lasted long. The sacrifices have continued to be performed by the Satsang since those days until our own period on a large or small scale, but they have been of minor importance. In all probability the purpose for which they came into existence was served, directly as well as indirectly, by the remarkable growth of the new movement through the force and character of its leader as well as his followers. The movement was gaining ground every day, and hence perhaps these Sacrifices, which did help its growth and expansion in its early stage, were out of place when the problem of its consolidation came to the front. The Sacrifices were, moreover, too exciting in their character, and the gatherings of people who came to

witness them were too big and heterogeneous to allow any systematic effort to be made for the teaching of the faith or organization of the Satsang itself. The reaction of such large concourses of people on the spiritual susceptibilities of Swami Sahajananda himself has been described by himself in one of his discourses, and although this particular reaction refers to a later date, it might apply with even greater truth to these occasions. After finishing the work of consecrating the temple at Ahmedabad, he went to Jetalpur and stayed there for the night, and had the following experience:

While there I began to think that I should remove from my mind the images of all the men that I had seen and all the activities also. And I felt very miserable in regard to this, so much so that I fell ill. Then I went to Dholka and stayed there for the night, and leaving Dholka I stayed for the night in a grove of trees near the village Kothya. While there I lost myself in contemplation so much that I had no consciousness of my body, I abandoned myself to this contemplation to such an extent that I forgot everything, and brought my mind to the condition it was in before all these events happened,.....and when all these thoughts and images were gone from my mind, I was free from the illness which these had brought.

It was probably on account of the reasons given above and almost as a natural evolution of the gatherings held at the time of these Sacrifices, that there came to be instituted what are called Samaiyas or Conventions of the members of the Satsang. The beginnings of these were already made from the first

years of Swami Sahajananda's ministry, when the disciples and especially the Sadhus were asked to come together in particular places on certain festival days. This could be done, however, only on a small scale at first. The Sadhus would congregate together in some place or other, and the Master would keep them with him for some weeks or even months, during which time he would give them as much knowledge as he could. It was at such times that the Sadhus received a great deal of inspiration and strength for their future labours, and the periods they lived with their Master in this way were the most glorious in their lives. This was a regular feature of their life from the beginning and remained so to the very end of the ministry of the Master. But this kind of gathering was confined mostly to the Sadhus, and the major portion of the laity had very little to do with it. To remedy this defect these Conventions came into existence, and they have been of very great help in the organization, discipline and progress of the Satsang.

Two such Conventions called Samaiyas in the language of the Satsang came to be held every year, each of them in a different part of the country so that people living in their neighbourhood could easily attend them. One of these places was Vartal in Gujrat and the other Gadhdha in Kathiawad. They were held in different seasons so that those who wanted to attend both could easily do it. The one at Vartal was held in the beginning of the Hindu year, the chief day being the eleventh of the bright half of the month

Kartika, and the other centered round the ninth day of the bright half of the month of Chaitra, the birthday of Shri Rama and also of Swami Sahajananda. These conventions are still held in these places.

These Samaiyas were occasions of reaping a real spiritual harvest. Large numbers of disciples gathered together from different quarters, which in itself was a source of much inspiration and strength to all and sundry. Such fellowship as was found at these times was bound to give a great deal of solidarity to the movement. There was also a general levelling up of many elements in the body. As the movement grew, large numbers of people belonging to the lower and even the lowest castes, and people belonging to the aboriginal and criminal tribes, nay, even of the untouchable classes, had come to join its ranks, and all these, on such occasions, felt their oneness with the body as they could not have done it in any other way. Here they were drawn away from a world where their social and other limitations and disabilities were emphasized, and brought into a new world of fellowship and brotherhood, a world in which neither birth nor social position but only spiritual character counted. In these and many other ways the cultural significance of these Conventions was bound to be immense.

This was not all. People of all kinds brought their own difficulties and problems for solution, and questions of discipline, methods of work, ways of organization, all these were discussed, and new decisions

arrived at. New plans and programmes were made, and fresh divisions and groupings of Sadhus took place at such times. Above all this, however, towered the spiritual purpose for which these Conventions were held. Their primary object was the moral and religious edification of the followers, and full attention was paid to its proper fulfillment. The Master did all he could to impart to his disciples religious knowledge in meetings held specially for the purpose, and the response of the disciples was equal to the zeal of the Teacher. They vied with one another in offering him their devotion and worship, and the life of the people assembled was one of continuous spiritual feasting. Individuals and groups of people of all kinds brought most precious gifts pertaining to their craft and art, or as their faith prompted or riches allowed. Many of these things have been preserved very carefully all these years, and they may be seen in some of the Temples and especially in the Temple at Vartal. One such gift may well be mentioned here. It was a sort of Indian coat brought as an offering by a tailor for the Master, a coat which was full of most exquisite workmanship. So beautiful was the work which he had done on it that a Prince offered to him, for his labour only in the preparation of a similar coat, a hundred Rs. This would mean today four times the amount looking to the higher level of prices reigning in everything, and although it came to four hundred times the cost of an ordinary coat, the man refused to do this saying that he could not do it for love of money, and that he had sewn the

other coat with love in every stitch of it. This may be an extreme instance, but there were many things among these offerings which were rare and precious, and were the outcome of love and reverence for the Master.

Another activity greater still was the building of the great Temples. This took place in the last decade and was the crowning act of Swami Sahajananda's ministry. As in much else, in this also this body is unique. The very magnitude of the Temples is a striking and novel feature in the Province in which this movement has worked, and that it should have succeeded in having so many temples of such size and beauty in so short a time reflects no small credit on the power and influence of the Master. These are standing monuments to his spiritual genius, his great power of organization, and remarkable co-operation among his followers. Under his inspiration several three-spired Temples have been built, with large adjacent buildings to house the Sadhus and others. Practically all this work was done by voluntary labour of the Sadhus and laymen. All these had been drawn from different communities and castes, and they vied with one another in laying their treasures of artistic skill and labour of all kinds including the roughest at the feet of their master. Stones were cut from quarries and brought from long distances by these men, bricks were made, and from the laying of the foundation to the very crowning of these Temples, all the work was done by the Sadhus and laymen belonging to the Satsang. In

this way the act of building these Temples was one of great sacrificial and co-operative service on the part of large numbers of people, and as such it wielded a tremendous moral and religious influence on their lives. It became not only symbolic but a part and parcel of the building of the Satsang.

In addition to these big Temples, there were built a large number of smaller ones all over the Province, and these also were built in the same manner. These latter are called *Hari Mandirs*, and have no images but pictures of Swami Sahajananda; whereas in the larger temples, images made of stone or metal are installed. The building of these temples, big and small, extended over a period of several years, and that together with their consecration proved to be occasions of great spiritual festivities intermingled with work and labour of all kinds. The number of all these temples runs probably into some thousands.

These are some of the outstanding activities of Swami Sahajananda during his ministry, and through them he gave shape and form to the movement over which he had come to preside. These were some of the means by which he developed it to great proportions, and in his own lifetime it assumed a size and form which would do credit to any religious teacher. Not only did he have hundreds of Sadhus who were solely devoted to him and to the Cause he had come to represent in their eyes, but he had tens of thousands of lay disciples drawn from all castes, classes and ranks

of people. A large number of these, indeed a remarkably large number of these, had experienced a real change in their lives, and this, if anything, was the special feature of the Movement. The current of spiritual life which had carried them was a mighty one, and its influence on their life was deep as well as manifold. Whatever is truly spiritual is bound to be highly ethical, and it was undoubtedly so with the present movement. It started with being primarily and chiefly a religious reform movement, and although this character of it remained intact all the time, as it gathered momentum it took up problems which are considered usually to belong to the sphere of social reform as an integral part of its religious work.

Thus, for instance, Swami Sahajananda took up early in his cause the problem of infanticide which was an evil prevalent among certain castes, especially the Rajputs and the Kathis. He who felt the hurt done to animals in Sacrifices as if it were to himself was bound to feel the same to a greater extent in the case of these little babes who were robbed of their life simply because they had the misfortune to be born as girls. He forbade this altogether among the disciples drawn from these castes, and their number was not small. The influence of such a wholesome example was bound to spread among others. The following conversation which took place between him and some of these people in regard to this question might well be quoted here to show how keenly he felt the evil of this wicked practice :



It was at Bandhia that several Rajputs among whom there were some men of prominence paid a visit to the Maharaj who, after receiving them properly and talking on general matters for some time, said to them : ' It is not right to commit infanticide, because thereby is committed a threefold sin, viz., one of murder of one's own family member, another of a child-murder, and the third a murder of one belonging to the female, i. e. the weaker sex. ' To this they replied that the marriage of daughters cost a great deal of money, and so they had to take recourse to such a practice. The Maharaj replied to this by saying : ' We shall defray all such expenses by raising money from the Satsang. But under no circumstances you should kill your infant daughters. ' At this some one said : ' We do not want to lower our prestige by marrying our daughters to all and sundry. ' Hearing this the Maharaj became angry, and dashing his hand against the floor said frowningly : ' Not only will you give your daughters to barbarians, but you will have to fulfill the word of God. Such a ruler\* is coming as will make it impossible for you people to live by robbery and outlawry. He will make you leave all such ways, and you will have to take a rosary in your hands, and that won't save you then. But if you do that as my disciples, that will be the saving of you. '

A disciple of the same caste in another place when forbidden by Swami Sahajananda to practise this custom any longer said, " I shall do everything but this. " To him the master replied, " I want you to follow only this commandment of mine, " and added " If you don't obey me, you will have to obey per force a power that will soon come. "

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\*The reference here is to the advent of the British Power which was not yet established in these parts.

Another problem was that of the Suttee, and though it was never so acute in the Western part of India as in the Eastern, especially Bengal, women used to burn themselves along with their husbands now and then. Against this evil custom Swami Sahajananda created a strong public opinion and many poems were composed by his followers wherein the excellence of a life of devotion to God lived by a widow was pointed out, and the act of voluntary suicide was depicted as belonging to those who did not possess a desire for salvation, nor knew what their proper duty as widows was. This had indeed a very wholesome influence on the mind of widows and the public in general.

Allied to this was the question of the treatment of widows in the home and in society. In this matter also things were never so bad in Gujrat as in other parts, owing in all probability to the humane influence of Jainism which has had a great hold for centuries on the people of the Province. There was, none the less, much room for improvement especially among those who were not Jains, and this movement did accomplish a good deal in this direction. It found an honorable career for religious-minded and capable widows in allowing them to be a kind of *Sadhavis* i. e. nuns who could preach and teach, and under the influence of such widows, whose number was not small, other widows and women belonging to the Satsang made much progress in religious study and life.

This movement was very helpful in raising the status of womankind in general. It has been mentioned

how the segregation of women from men in worship etc. was instrumental in making the women of the Satsang more self-reliant. This was true to such an extent that among laywomen, the majority of widows and quite a large number of women belonging to the higher castes were instructed to read and write, an achievement which reflects no small credit to the movement, especially at a time when knowledge of the three Rs. was practically nil among the majority of women. One very noteworthy and beautiful feature of this body is the high place that the women have in its life, and several women—some scores of them—are mentioned in its literature as having contributed a great deal of devotion and service to the cause.

As regards backward castes and even criminal tribes and classes, the movement did work among them such as no other, whether indigenous or foreign, did. In fact its work among these people constitutes one of its chief glories. Large numbers from these castes joined the Satsang, and there was a wholesale change in their life for the better. The very first thing they did on entering this Holy Fellowship was to give up meat and wine, and that alone wrought in them a real religious and cultural refinement. They were made to live like Brahmins so far as outward cleanliness was concerned, and the inner life of many of them was higher than that of a large number of people belonging to other folds and faiths. They gave up their evil habits and practices such as stealing, robbery, adultery etc., and they became so puritanic in their

life that they eschewed all intoxicants and even such things as smoking, smelling snuff and chewing tobacco. They gave up the use of onion and garlic, and personal and domestic cleanliness in all its forms became a marked characteristic of a follower of Swami Sahajananda. That the Satsang drew its followers in such large numbers from artisan and lower castes such as masons, carpenters, farmers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, kolis etc., came to be considered a sort of reproach in the eyes of the so-called higher and intellectual classes, and even now this is considered to be one of the chief causes of some of the peculiar features of this Fellowship. The extraordinary success of Swami Sahajananda in his own life-time and of the Satsang after him has been attributed to this, and though this has been pointed out as a weakness by its critics, it redounds to the credit of the Master all the more. A large number of the Sadhus came from such castes, and the life of the laity was revolutionized. The same thing happened in the case of military castes as well. The most remarkable thing, however, in connection with this work was the great change, moral and spiritual, that it wrought in the lives of innumerable individuals. This was the chief and the only thing the Satsang had to offer, and the people joined it solely for the moral benefit it gave. The following story of one from among the criminal classes is not the only one of its kind in the annals of the Satsang :

Verabhai was at first the head of a gang of thieves and robbers, and he would not leave anything unpossessed

if his heart was once set on it. He became a member of the Satsang. Once while he was coming to see the Maharaj, on his way he cut a tooth-stick from a tree standing in somebody's field, but immediately his conscience began to prick him at the thought that he had committed a theft in as much as he had taken the stick without the permission of the owner of the field. He, therefore, went to the village nearby and finding the owner of the field bowed down to him and said : ' I have taken this stick without your permission and so please pardon me my guilt of committing this theft. ' Then he came to the Maharaj, stayed with him for a few days, and when he was about to leave he said : ' Maharaj, have mercy on me so that all my bonds might disappear, and I may be able to serve you all the time. ' After this in about a year's time he lost twenty-two members of his family, and he came to the Maharaj and became a Sadhu. Later on once while a fight was going on somewhere, he, being a man of martial temperament, took someone's sword and making a shield of someone's quilt, joined in the fray, but it was impossible for him to do the least injury to any one, while one of the opponents with a blow cut off one of his ears. Then the Maharaj changed the color of his dress to white\* and kept him as his attendant. Later on when on an early morning he was meditating on the Maharaj, he saw such sins as lust, anger etc. leaving him one by one in visible form, each one with its hosts, and when Verabhai asked each of them who he was, the answer was : ' I am Lust ( or Anger etc. ) and as I cannot live any more in you, I am leaving with all my things. '

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\*This change from the orange-colored dress to white was made because he had broken the vow of non-injury which he was bound to observe as a Sadhu. He had now lost his status as a Sadhu; but what happened afterwards shows that he had advanced much further than many Sadhus.

Verabhai said this to the Maharaj in the morning who said to him in reply : ' These cannot remain in you any longer. '

Another story which is equally remarkable might also be given here:

Joban Pagi was the head of a notorious gang of robbers and he had the reputation of being a man for whom it was as easy to cut a throat as a water-melon. This man conceived once the bold design of stealing some of the horses of Swami Sahajananda and his party at the time of one of the great Sacrifices. When he came with some of his accomplices in the dead of night to the stables where these horses were kept, he found near every horse the person of the Maharaj, and being thus foiled and seeing the miraculous power of the Master, he became a disciple and a devoted one at that. This was naturally a matter of much comment and amazement among those who knew him, and once somebody seeing the mark of discipleship on his forehead asked him : " Well, Joban Pagi, what did you see in Swami Narayana that you have become his follower ? Can he make a cow of an ass ? " To this the reply was : " Don't you see how he has turned wild robbers like myself into meek and gentle Sadhus ? Is this not more than changing an ass into a cow ? "

Even harder than the conversion of such notorious robbers as these was that of many among the Kathis\*, the martial community which has given its

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\*Some of the characteristics of these people have been given by Col. Walker who came to Kathiawad in 1808 in these words : " The Kathis are distinguished only for rapacious habits and robbery. To this mode of life they attach neither disgrace nor reproach. On the contrary they boast of their devastations and rapine, and without seeking to cloak the matter, call themselves plainly thieves. Without property,

name to the province, viz., Kathiawad. These Kathis are a famous tribe, and there are two more or less plausible accounts given of their origin. One says that they had their original seat in Kurdistan in Asia Minor. According to the other, they are descendants of those described in the Aryan inscriptions as Khatti, and in the Old Testament as Hittites.

The great power of Swami Sahajananda attracted many among these people from the early part of his ministry, so much so that he even took his residence in the home of one of them, a small feudatory chief called Dada Khachar of Gadhada. This chief and his two sisters\* called Jivu Bai and Ladu Bai were so devoted to him that he, who would not be bound by any earthly tie, made himself a willing captive of their faith and devotion, and made himself almost a member of their family. These two sisters were married, but because of their deep religious turn of mind they left their husbands' home and stayed with their father Abhel Khachar. It was some time after this had happened that the family came to know

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and frequently without a fixed place of residence, the Kathis despise and brave the resentment of states which are much more powerful than themselves. They pursue their licentious habits without restraint. The disorder and misery that arise from this state of perpetual hostility is easily traced throughout this country. "

\*As in many things, in this also there is a singular parallel to the life of Jesus Christ whose love for Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, is very similar to that of Swami Sahajananda for Dada Khachar and his two sisters.

Swami Sahajananda, and they all became his most devoted disciples. So much so was this the case that it is doubtful if any family as a whole willingly and cheerfully sacrificed so much for the sake of the Master. For over two decades Swami Sahajananda made his headquarters in their home, and as he was always surrounded by a number of people, and groups of Sadhus came to him at all times, the family had to bear no small amount of expense and trouble. So great was their love for their Master, however, that they did all this with the greatest willingness. It may also be added here that the two sisters, Jivu Bai and Ladu Bai, were amongst the foremost women teachers in the Satsang.

There were many among the Kathis besides this family who were devoted to Swami Sahajananda. Some of them became Sadhus, and there were others who always served him as an escort wherever he went. These were called his "friends". Through all these, there was wrought a great change in the manners and the mode of life of this lawless community, so much so that even the British officers in those early days of the establishment of the British Power in these parts commended very highly the work of Swami Sahajananda among the Kathis and the criminal castes and tribes such as Kolis etc. Here is the testimony given by a contemporary Englishman who was an eye-witness of the change the great Teacher had brought about among these people:



But the genius of Sahajananda Swami was not confined simply to the rigid establishment of Hindu worship in *virginal integrity*; it was also directed against the *irregularities of the age* and to the recovery of thousands of those unfortunate men to be found throughout Gujrat whose means of subsistence hitherto were equally lawless and precarious. Of his success in this latter respect there is abundant testimony from the vast hordes who have been reclaimed to honest and industrious pursuits, while the *present undisturbed state of the country compared with the conditions previously* will speak for themselves. (The italics are of the English writer himself.)

A testimony of this kind given by an Englishman soon after Swami Sahajananda left the world shows the extraordinary change he had brought about in the life of these communities and in the Province. Every Englishman who visited Gujrat in these years mentions this as an accomplished fact and pays noble tribute to the great Teacher through whose wonderful influence this change had taken place.

The members of these martial and criminal tribes gave up meat and drink; they renounced the use of opium and tobacco to both of which most of them were very much addicted. Room might be made here for the following interesting story to show how these things were done:

Once in Gadhdha there came to the Master the chief of Kambhala called Mulu Khachar. The Master asked him to be a Satsangi, whereupon he said that he could not be that because it was impossible for him to give up opium and smoking. The Master replied to him that he was free to do this provided he practised the five major vows. To

this the chief consented and became a disciple. Then the Master took him with him on one of his visits to Vartal, and on the way people would remark seeing the company : " All these men who come riding along are Swami Narayanis\* except that man who is carrying a hookah with him. " This sort of criticism was made often on the way, and it made Mulu Khachar so angry that he broke his hookah on the way. Then the party came to Vartal and there came to the Convention people from far and near. These would come to the place where the Kathis had put up, and they would meet and embrace the latter with great love and affection, but none would go to Mulu Khachar as they saw him taking opium. This was enough to make him give up this too. Later on when the Master came to know of this, he asked Mulu Khachar as to whose counsel it was that had made him give up these things, and the latter replied : " I gave up smoking because of the criticism of the unbelievers and opium because of the criticism of the believers. "

Another notable feature of Swami Sahajananda's work was the admission of the Moslems into the Satsang This has been always done by the Bhagwata Dharma at its best in India, e. g. in such movements as those of Ramananda in the north, and Shri Chaitanya in Bengal. It seems to be, however, a new feature in the history of Vaishnavism in Gujrat, and Swami Sahajananda did not hesitate to make Moslems his disciples almost from the beginning of his career. In course of time, some scores of families belonging especially to the Khoja community joined the Fellowship, and some of them have remained faithful to it until now. This

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\*This means the followers of Swami Narayana.

is a community which is on the border-line between Hinduism and Islam, and the peculiarity of its belief is that they look upon the Aga Khan family as divine. In regard to Hinduism their attitude is one of eclecticism and also fulfillment, for while believing in all the incarnations of the Hindus they look upon their head i. e. the Aga Khan as the last and supreme incarnation of God. Another marked peculiarity of these people is that many of them are true to their name which signifies *seekers*. It was no wonder then that many of them saw and recognized the glory of Swami Sahajanda and accepted him as their Master. In addition to these, there were a few from the Moslems proper who became his disciples. The Fellowship opened its doors of salvation to all and sundry, in fact this was its chief and sole aim, and, therefore, it embraced the Moslems also.

Even the Untouchables were not excluded from the Satsang. It is true these were not admitted to the inner part of the temples, but they were made disciples and in one or two places they built temples of their own.\* As regards the attitude of Swami Sahajanda towards these unfortunate people in those early days when neither Reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy nor Christian missionaries gave any thought to them, we find it expressed in the following story which gives us an insight into his great humanity:

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\*Only recently the present writer had a very interesting experience of the way in which these people are looked upon in the Satsang. While he was travelling, there came into his

Once in Loya an untouchable woman called Ganga, \* a Dhed from Chuda, came to see the Maharaj, whereupon the Maharaj asked the women seated there to give her a seat in a corner on their side of the meeting. At this some of the women began to murmur. Hearing this, the Maharaj said to one of the principal women—the wife of Sura Khachar, a big landlord—"When an animal dies in your yard, who removes it?" The reply was: "The Dheds." The Maharaj again asked: "When an animal dies in your stables, who removes it?" The reply again was: "The Dheds." The Master then said: "If you have no objection to a Dhed coming into your stables which are a part of your house, why do you object to this woman sitting in a corner?" He then added: "This Ganga was a Nagir Brahmin by caste in her previous birth, but as she, because of her pride of caste, did not respect the devotees of God belonging to lower castes, she became an untouchable in her present life.

compartment a few women belonging to the farmer caste who were returning from one of the Conventions which are periodically held in some of the chief centres of the movement. While talking with one of them he asked whether there were any untouchables as disciples among them, whereupon the woman said that there were some, and she of her own accord added that these people deserved all the greater admiration and respect seeing what it cost them to be members of the Satsang. She meant that while it was no sacrifice for many people belonging to the higher castes to give up meat and drink, for many of them never took these things, it was certainly a very different matter with these people to give up all such things.

\*The very fact that the name and place of this woman have been given in this story is an additional testimony to the way in which she was looked upon by the followers of the Master who handed down the story. She is not a nameless entity, but a person whom they look upon with respect.

To Swami Sahajananda all human beings, of whatever caste, creed or community, were spirits, divine spirits at that, and he conceived it to be his special mission to make people aware of this central fact of human life. He saw this luminous fact behind the masks of birth, social position, learning etc., and thought of human beings only as such. The Untouchables were no exception to this as we shall see again from this little incident which reveals his deep and intense love for souls as well as his method of work.

Once upon a time the Maharaj saw several children and he asked them who they were. Upon their telling him that they were Dheds (an untouchable community), he asked them to repeat several times these words: 'We are spirits.' After they had done this he asked them again what they were. They replied: 'We are Dheds.' At this he again told them to repeat the words 'We are spirits,' many times. This they did, but when he asked them once more who they were, they said: 'We are Dheds.' He then said to those who were with him: 'See, how these children are united to their flesh so that they cannot forget the incident of their birth.'

In addition to this social, moral and religious uplift of the disciples belonging to all castes and communities, the indirect influence of the Satsang upon the general public was indeed very great. The movement brought in its train a wholesale change in the manners and morals of the people. It acted as a powerful leaven with which the whole society came to be leavened in course of time. Evil customs such as the singing of lewd songs and using filthy language

during certain holidays such as the Holi were tabooed in the Fellowship, and such festivals came to be celebrated in accordance with the lofty and puritanic spirit of the new religion. On occasions of marriage, women used to sing songs which were full of jokes of a rough, undignified kind bordering sometimes on indecency, and this was forbidden among the faithful ones. Reform in this matter came about in this way. Once Swami Sahajananda was present at a marriage, and when he heard such songs he at once left the place. When his hosts knew why he had done this, they begged him to come back promising that such songs would not be sung any more. It was from that very place that the Master sent a circular letter to his followers all over the Province forbidding them the use of such songs, and asking them instead to sing songs celebrating the marriage of Shri Krishna with Rukhmani. He asked such poets as Swamis Muktananda and Premananda to compose songs that may be used on these occasions.

The new movement also dealt a most severe blow to many of the superstitions prevailing among the people in those days. The life of the people was steeped in superstition of the rankest kind, and as long as this held sway it was very difficult to change the moral and religious life of the people, especially as whatever religion was there had entwined itself very closely with such superstition. Swami Sahajananda preached, however, a kind of religion which was most thorough-going and militant, and there are innumer-

able instances of people literally throwing away all their gods and goddesses on their joining the Satsang. The disciples were no more tormented with a belief in ghosts and evil powers, and they ceased to worship any longer even the beneficent gods and goddesses. The worship of the Supreme Being, nay, the Supreme Person—the Purushottama— was the very life—breath of the movement, and there was no room in it for worship of any lesser being. As a matter of fact, the members of the Satsang felt themselves superior to all such, and so the axe was laid at the very root of all superstition. Proofs of this lie scattered all over the history of the Fellowship, but we may cite one or two incidents to show how keen was the edge of this militant Theism.

Once upon a time the Maharaj went to see a man who was ill, but on seeing a thread tied to the bed of the sick man, a sort of charm for the removal of the illness, he at once left the place. He did this to show that true discipleship was not compatible with such beliefs.

Here is another:—

A disciple had fever. While he was asleep an ascetic was brought by his family to his bed and he removed the fever. When the patient awoke his mother told what had happened, whereupon he went after the ascetic and told him: "Return me back my fever. I do not want it to leave on account of you. My master is Swami Narayana, and if it be his will the fever might go or let it remain." He got the fever back but that did not produce any change in his mind.

Thus while the activities of Swami Sahajananda were mainly spiritual, their influence pervaded the entire sphere of life, and the manners and morals of an entire Province were affected by the remarkable atmosphere which he was able to create round about him.



## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **Romance of Discipleship**

**Few teachers of Religion in the history of the world have been able to inspire in their own lifetime in their followers such loyalty and faithfulness as Swami Sahajananda. His relations with his disciples were unique, and surpassingly tender and deep. The loyalty, attachment and devotion that were shown to him by his disciples and which were but a response to his deep love and solicitude for them, form a record which is remarkable and has few parallels. It is these mutual relations that constitute the heart and soul of the Satsang, and their memory, which has been cherished as a most precious possession by the body all these years, rightly forms the essence of its spiritual nourishment. This is, in fact, the core of the Satsang as they call it.**

**The most notable fact about Swami Sahajananda is that he came to be worshipped in his own lifetime as the Supreme Being Himself, as an incarnation equal to Rama and Krishna, the greatest incarnations the Hindus have known. Some of his foremost disciples later on came to look upon him as even greater than these. That he came to be known in course of time by the very name of God, Swami Narayana, which he gave to his disciples, is a fact altogether unique in Hindu religious history and also in the history of the**

world. It is in full conformity with this that few men in the whole of human history have had their persons so well and thoroughly described, or their actions so fully recorded as is the case with Swami Sahajananda. Everything that he said and did bore a divine character in the eyes of his disciples, and thus it imprinted itself on their memory forever. Things concerning him began to be recorded almost from the beginning of his career, and there are quite a number of records of his sayings and doings. It has been said, and rightly to a certain extent, that the Hindus have lacked the historical sense, but here we have an exception and a very remarkable one at that. No man was ever surrounded by so many Boswells as he, and in saying this not only no sting is meant but on the other hand a high tribute is paid both to the Master and his followers. The impact of his personality was so great that it could not but reproduce this kind of Boswellian atmosphere on so large a scale. We see here Hero-worship at its highest, because the Hero is worshipped as the Divinity and the Deity Himself, and looking to the character of the Hero and the worshippers and the rich fruit such worship bore in his own lifetime and later on, one cannot but admit that here is one of the noblest examples of hero-worship given to mankind.

One of the most remarkable things about Swami Sahajananda is that the stories that have come down about him are very similar to those that are found in the Gospels of Jesus Christ, not only in character but

even in the very formation of them. This is a peculiar feature of these, and in this parallelism they are unique. A thing still more remarkable is that neither Swami Sahajananda nor any of his disciples knew anything whatsoever about the Gospels or Christianity. The difference, however, between these and the Gospel stories lies in this that the former are many times more in number, and they give the life of the Master in very close detail. The very eating and drinking of Swami Sahajananda, the way he walked, the way he rode, his manner of speaking, in fact everything relating to him has been described so closely and fully that it would be difficult to find a parallel to this in any literature, religious or secular. His person is described with a wealth of detail which is as surprising as it is unique. His disciples believed fully that their Master was divine, and hence to them his person and everything that he did and said was divine. In their eyes the whole universe had centered in him, and everything relating to him was of the very essence of life and life eternal.

They extended this Hero-worship even to the things that he used. His clothes, though he may have put them on only once, e. g. when a particular kind of dress was brought to him by a disciple or a group of them as an offering which happened again and again, his shoes, his chairs or seats, his pens, his bedding, — in fact, everything that was used or touched by him bore a most sacred character in their eyes, and these things have been preserved all these

years in houses attached to some of the chief Temples. The disciples have raised monuments all over the Province in the shape of umbrellas made of marble or sandstone, some of them extremely beautiful, over the places where Swami Sahajananda may have sat or stood or preached from. The rivers or tanks he bathed in, the groves he sat in, the houses he lived in, and even the very dust of many of these places, have become sacred in the eyes of his followers, and they count it a blessing to touch all this hallowed ground. They have done in some ways with their Master already within this short period what was done in the course of centuries by the followers of Gautama Buddha and Jesus, without, however, going to the length of the former of these who have not hesitated to offer their worship to the relics of their Master, the great Buddha. There is one exception to this, however. There are probably thousands of prints of the soles of the feet of Swami Sahajananda, most of them in possession of different families, and they are handed down from generation to generation as precious heir-looms and some of them are kept in temples where a sort of worship is offered them.

The reason of all this Hero-worship, extraordinary as it is, is not far to seek. Swami Sahajananda had in him something which inspired wonder and surprise from the very beginning of his career. It was this which attracted to him Swami Muktananda when he, as a boy of eighteen or nineteen, came to him in

Kathiawar. The same was the cause why he was selected by Swami Ramananda as his successor within such a short time of his arrival and notwithstanding his youthfulness. Then followed the Samadhi chapter which we have already mentioned. So great was his influence upon his followers that they bore the worst kind of hardships and persecutions for the cause which their Master had come to embody in their eyes, and within one night he made five hundred of ordinary Sadhus into Paramhausas which was a remarkable achievement. Gradually, if not at once, the feeling grew in the mind of these disciples that their Master was divine. At first they began to rank him as higher than Swami Ramananda, which was indeed a great step at least for the older men. But this process did not end here. Some of the disciples began to look upon him as upon the greatest incarnations the Hindus have known, viz., Rama and Krishna, and a few of them thought of him as even greater than these. While this last step was not taken except perhaps by a few, especially as Swami Sahajananda himself would not allow himself to be ranked higher than Rama and Krishna, it has been much more common since his passing away or "return" to his home as it is called, and comparisons and even contrasts are openly drawn between these and Swami Sahajananda. Some of the foremost disciples of Swami Sahajananda have openly proclaimed the doctrine that their Master is much greater than any of the preceding Avatars, "all of whom are standing with folded hands before their

Master and praying for crumbs of His mercy." This constitutes in their eyes *the faith*, which alone assures supreme salvation. It may be added here that in this the Swami Narayanis are unique in India, for no sect in India which wants to be recognised as orthodox, has ventured to put its leader in the same rank as Rama and Krishna, let alone the idea of putting him higher.

In full conformity with this, the disciples and even ordinary followers of the Master who were with him and had known him have a very important place in the eyes of the body. In one of the biographies of the Master, the author has given the names of most of the Sadhus and also of a very large number of lay followers, both men and women. All these have become sanctified because of their association with the Master and hence have a place of their own. Even the meanest of them have their names remembered and recorded because they have been transfigured by the glory which their Master shed on them. Long after the Master was gone, "those who had seen him" in flesh had a sort of sanctity attached to them, and this was considered a great privilege by them and others. While this was the case with ordinary followers, it was undoubtedly much more so with those whom the Master had given a high position. Some of them were honoured almost as much as the Master, and this because of his express command. Swami Mukta-nanda was of course the chief of these, and even Swami Sahajananda honored him as his Guru i. e. Teacher.

All this Hero-worship was not a matter of mere sentiment, much less lip-service. Emotion did play a large part in it, but it was secondary. The acid test of faithfulness and loyalty to the Master was not sentimental homage, but obedience, complete and absolute obedience to the Master. This is what he taught them and only those people in whom it was exemplified fully who are cited as perfect and true disciples. It is this obedience to the commands of the Master, which, in fact, constitutes much of the romance of discipleship in this Holy Fellowship.

We have already seen the supreme example of this in the cheerful acceptance on the part of the Sadhus, some hundreds of them, of the great renunciation imposed on them by the administration of the vow of Paramhansa in one night. These were the first Apostles of the new Faith, and some hundreds more joined them in the course of the next decade and a half or so that this kind of life was kept open for the Sadhus. All these Paramhansas gave an example of obedience to their Master which is remarkable in many ways.

We may now cite another example which is equally remarkable and characteristic of this Fellowship. It is this:—

About a year or two after the Master had made these Sadhus into Paramhansas, he was in Cutch where, while talking with a rich disciple who was proud of his social position, the latter said something deprecatory of the Sadhus. His remark was to this effect, viz., that it was only

those who were poor and had no position in life who became Sadhus. As such a belief in regard to the Sadhus was harmful primarily to the man himself, the Master wanted to teach him a lesson, and so there and then he sent a circular letter to about twenty of his lay disciples, all of whom were holding high position in life. The letter contained this command that as soon as they got it, they should immediately leave their home, go to Jetalpur, there take the vow of Paramhansa and proceed to Benares, a distance of about fifteen hundred miles, on foot for the study of the Shastras. Most of these men were of the landlord class and had great possessions. All these except one or two left their home as soon as they received the letter, and some of them received the letter while they were out on their farms etc., and they did not even care to go to their homes but left immediately for Jetalpur, before proceeding to Benares. Not only this. There were two or three amongst these who were not mentioned by name by the Master in his letter, but because he had added "etc. etc." after the specified names, they thought it their duty to leave. One of these extra men was a rich young man of the farmer caste, and he was being taken in a procession just before his marriage ceremony was to take place, when the letter came to one of his relations, and as soon as he knew that the call had come from the Master, although his name was not on the list, he left there and then and proceeded to Jetalpur. The Master had already arranged that these men should not proceed to Benares but come to him in Cutch where he was, and when they all came there, he sent them back home to their respective walks of life. There was, however, one man who refused to go back, the man who had left while he was about to be married, and later on he was made a Sadhu with the name Adbhutananda Swami. This man has written a life of Swami Narayana.



which, though a fragment, in its spirit and form, and in the mysterious charm and beauty pervading it reminds one very strongly of the Gospel of St. John.\*

We shall now take a few individual cases as examples of remarkable faithfulness and obedience to the Master. One of the foremost among these is Dada Khachar whom we have already mentioned. He was a Kathi landlord whose devotion and that of his two sisters had captivated Swami Sahajananda to such an extent that he made their home his headquarters. This was possible only because Dada Khachar had surrendered his all to his Guru, although he was a man living in the world and had large domestic and other responsibilities. For the Master to stay at his house for several months in a year and this for nearly two decades meant not only a heavy charge, especially as Swami Sahajananda was always surrounded by many Sadhus, but also much danger especially as the great Teacher had many enemies among Princes and Chiefs. It also meant obloquy and shame among his own people, for it was considered very derogatory for a man of his class and position in life to be so closely

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\*While talking of this to a young Englishman of the Anglican Church, I was very interested to hear from him that there was a tradition in the Church that the marriage at Cana of Galilee, which Jesus attended and where he manifested his glory for the first time according to the Gospel of St. John, was of no other than that of the beloved disciple himself. I have long since thought of this fragment as very similar in spirit to this Gospel, and so it was a welcome surprise to be told of this tradition.

associated with a religious teacher who, moreover, was a reformer. There were wicked men who did not hesitate to spread even ugly stories about the Master and his sisters. But Dada Khachar's faith in the Master was so great that he did not allow any of these considerations to come in the way of his service to the Master. Of his deep trust we can give only one or two stories here :

Once the Maharaj went for a bath to the stream outside the little town of Gadhada. There he saw an ascetic lighting fire for cooking food in the open, but as there was a light shower, it being the rainy season, he was not able to do this. The Master saw this, and returned to Durbar (the manor house), and while the usual meeting was held, looking at Dada Khachar asked him to prepare a place for boarding and lodging for the ascetic-pilgrims who passed by Gadhada. The latter at once replied: "Let us reserve our residential quarters for them." When the Maharaj asked him where he and his family would live if they gave their house for this purpose, the chief at once answered: "I shall live with the Sadhus, and the ladies of the house with the women-ascetics (belonging to the Satsang)."

Of course this was not allowed to be done. The following story brings out the same trait again :

Once Ram Pratap Bhai\* was staying near the manor-house with his family, when there came one day a Brahmin begging alms. To this one of the women in the house replied: 'We are strangers here and so we have nothing to give.' The Master heard this and going to Dada Khachar asked :

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\* He was an elder brother of Swami Sahajananda who came with the whole family when the Master called them all in the latter part of his ministry.

him for a thousand Rs. which the latter at once brought out. Then the Master asked him to go with him carrying the bag to his brother's place, and reaching the house, the Maharaja said to the ladies: 'Here is money; give it to the poor.' Even after hearing this Dada Khachar did not feel for a moment that the amount was too big to be taken from him for such a purpose.\*

One more story of the same person may be added :

Once Dada Khachar was being shaved, and when half of his head was shaven, † some one said that the Maharaj wanted him whereupon he immediately left off being shaved, and wrapping a piece of cloth round his head went to the Master. The latter seeing him thus queerly dressed asked him whence he came, and on being told what he (Dada Khachar) was engaged in when the call came, the Master at once realized that he had come half-shaved and so told him "Why did you not get yourself shaved fully before coming ?" The reply at once came forth: 'That can wait, but to obey your command is the most important thing to do, and it brooks no delay.'

It is perhaps difficult to realize the significance of an act like this even in India to-day, and much more so outside, but at the time we are speaking of a thing like this would not be done except under the gravest of emergencies. In the present case it was a

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\* Even to-day when a rupee counts hardly one-fourth of what it did in those days, this sum would be considered very large for such a purpose, and yet he gave it very cheerfully. What is still more remarkable is that he carried it himself.

† The Hindus shave the whole of their head except the crown where they keep a tuft called the *Shikha*. This practice of shaving the whole of the head is now falling into disuse.

most thorough-going devotion to Swami Sahajananda that made Dada Khachar do this. An action of this kind was exceedingly undignified in the eyes of the world and also ceremoniously unclean, and therefore, it shows the tremendous hold that Swami Sahajananda had over the entire being of Dada Khachar. Such devotion was not confined to him alone in his family. Both of his sisters were also equally devoted. As a matter of fact it was their devotion which inspired that of their brother. They were called Jivu Bai and Ladu Bai. The first of these was the elder one, and of her it is said that since the day the Master left his home as a boy, she used to see him and all that he did as a present reality. Later on she came to be married, but her mind was so engrossed in religion that she could not continue her married life, came to her father's place and stayed there for all her life. While she was here, she came to know Swami Sahajananda and became one of his most faithful disciples. In course of time both her father-in-law and mother-in-law also became members of the Satsang. Similar was the case more or less with her younger sister Ladu Bai. Both these sisters proved of very great help to the Satsang, especially in organizing the Woman's side of the Fellowship. The following story well brings out the stuff of which they were made :

Brahmananda Swami was called Ladu Barot, and being a poet of real merit he used to get rich gifts from Princes etc. He was vain and fond of show, and therefore, used to put on very costly ornaments on his person. When he saw the Master, however, he did feel something super-

natural. One day the Maharaj said to him: "Ladu Barot, these sisters of Dada Khachar belong to the landlord class, but they do not go to their husbands, nor do they put on fine clothes or wear ornaments, nor do they eat well, due to all which people speak much ill of us. Can you not, therefore, persuade them to desist from such a course?" Accordingly Ladu Barot went to them, and being a very eloquent man began to plead with them to live in a way that would look proper in the eyes of the world. After he had finished his argument, Ladu Bai said to him: "Now, you should hear us and after that we shall see what to do. You know we are of the landlord class and we are also beautiful. If we put on fine clothes etc., and go about as other women do, we would attract attention from men and if some of them look upon us with a lustful eye, who would be responsible for that sin? Either the people who look upon us in that way are sinful, or we are; but if you take upon yourself that sin, we are ready to do what you want us to do. As a matter of fact, this body is made only of dirt, such as flesh, blood, bone etc." She went on in this strain showing what the inside of the body was, so much so that a feeling of nausea was created in the mind of the poet, and then she added: "Ladu Barot, you are a handsome man, and besides are putting on ornaments. Now, if women are attracted towards you, either they or you will commit sin, but if you do not put on these things, neither would there be any attraction, nor would there be any sin." At this Ladu Barot thought within his mind that the Maharaj had really sent him to these women not to give but to take advice. He went straight to the Maharaj, took off all his ornaments, placed them before the Maharaj, and gave up the world.

As has been mentioned already, Ladu Barot known as Swami Brahmananda became one of the prin-

cipal disciples of the Master and the chief poet of the Satsang. There is another story of the conversion of this man which is equally characteristic of the Movement, and we give it here inasmuch as it is quite possible that both these may be complementary accounts:

Maharaj Shri was once in Kariani. At that time Ladu Barot went to Bhavanagar, and on his making a poem on the prince thereof called Vajesinhajee was rewarded with Rs. 1800 in cash and many other gifts. On his way back he desired to get some ornaments made with the money he had just earned. On inquiry he found that there were two goldsmiths in Bhuj of the name of Hirjee Bhai and Soonderjee Bhai, both disciples of Swami Narayana, who were very good at making ornaments. He also learned that if he could get a letter of recommendation from Swami Narayana his work would be easier. He, therefore, went to Swami Narayana and requested him to give a letter, which the latter did, and the substance of what he wrote was this:

"You are a poet and so is this man. If an elephant gets stuck in mud, it is only another elephant who can drag him out from there and none else. Keep him, therefore, with you for six months feeding him at your expense and cast the mould\* in such a way that it may never change."

Ladu Barot went with this letter to Bhuj, got some more money from the Prince there, and stayed with the two brothers mentioned here. After some time when the Maharaj went there, Ladu Barot, whose mould was already cast in the meantime, was ordained a Sadhu and given the name Brahmananda.

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\*This meant the mould of the ornament and also that of his life.

Swami Brahmananda was not only a great poet, but a man of action as well. He gave the greatest help to his Master in building some of the big temples. He was, moreover, the one man in the entire Satsang who used his poet's licence in this that he behaved towards his Master as towards a friend in spite of his great devotion to him.

We shall now cite an example of a man who belonged to a comparatively backward class of people to show what devotion Swami Narayana inspired in them also :

There was a man called Samat Patel who was a faithful follower of the Lord. One day he came to see the Maharaj when the latter asked him if he would be able to spare some money as he (the Master) was in need of it for some purpose. Replying in the affirmative, Samat Patel went home, sold everything that he possessed—his land, cart, bullocks, cattle and everything else—realized about four thousand Rs. from this sale, and bringing the entire amount to the Master laid it at his feet. On the Master's asking him whence he got so much money, he said he had it with him. Not satisfied with this answer the Maharaj persisted in getting the truth from him and Samat Patel told everything. At this the Maharaj took only one thousand Rs. and returned the rest to him though with difficulty.

This other story about the same man might well be given here to show what a delicate sense of honor he had developed under the influence of the new teaching :

Once Samat Patel went to fetch his son's wife from her parents' home. There was some quarrel, however, bet-

ween the girl and her husband, and so the father of the girl in anger said: 'Your son does not want her. Why have you come here then? Do you want her for yourself?' On hearing this Samat Patel made himself a eunuch before he left the place.

The father of the girl in this story perhaps uttered these words only light-heartedly and in anger, meaning nothing serious, but Samat Patel was too sensitive and religious-minded to bear the thought of such a thing being said to him, and this was why he took such a drastic step.

The following story might well be given to illustrate the remarkable devotion that Swami Narayana inspired in his followers :

Sunderjee Bhai was holding a high office in the state of Cutch, which was, then, the biggest Rajput state in what is now known as Western India. He was a disciple of Swami Ramananda, but having come to know the glory of the Maharaj, he had become his disciple also. Once he came to Gondal in Kathiawad for the performance of the marriage ceremony of one of the princes. Knowing that the Maharaj was in a place quite close to Gondal, he left for it and reached it in the evening when the Maharaj was holding a meeting. It was getting dark and so when he paid his respects to the Master, the latter asked him who he was. To this he replied: "Your servant Sunderjee." The Maharaj said, "It is not easy to be a servant: a true servant is he who obeys the command of his Master." Sunderjee answered: "I am ready to do anything that your Worship will command." At once the Maharaj said: "Be a Sadhu." Upon this Sunderjee Bhai at once took off his rich



clothes\*, and the Maharaj himself cut off all the hair on his head and face, and gave him the name Govind Das. The Maharaj then asked him to go to Swami Muktananda who was in another room to pay him his respects. The latter was very much surprised to see him in his new dress, and knowing all brought Sunderjee back to the Maharaj. Swami Muktananda then remonstrated with the Master for such a step as this. At this the Maharaj asked Sunderjee Bhai to put on his old dress again and go back to his party. This the latter did, but he was placed in a very difficult position † especially as he had his hair cut and he had to find some excuse for it.

Here is one more story showing what remarkable obedience Swami Narayana could command from his disciples :

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\*He had come as the head of the party which had come to perform the marriage ceremony of one of the princes. It was the custom in those days among Rajputs and especially Princes not to come in person for marriage, but to send their sword with the party, and the bride was married to the sword. The custom had evidently its origin in the necessity of safeguarding the person of the Prince from dangers on the way, or treachery in the place of marriage itself. Under such circumstances, the greatest responsibility lay upon the person to whom the marriage party was entrusted, and this was the case with Sunderjee at this time. That he became a Sadhu in spite of this at the mere word of his Master shows what respect he had for the Master's word.

†Shaving of the moustache etc. was then considered a sign of mourning among the Hindus, and as he had come with the marriage party, almost as its head, such an act on his part was altogether out of place and could easily be construed into a most inauspicious insult offered to the marriage.

In Baroda there was a man called Nath Bhakta. He was a Patidar by caste and was a faithful follower. He was of the middle class. Once he came to Gadhada to see the Maharaj, and staying there five days went back. Soon after he had left, Swami Narayana sent someone after him to call him back. As Nath Bhakta had already a start and was anxious to reach home as early as possible, the man who went after him could overtake him only a few miles from Baroda. When he gave his message to Nath Bhakta, the latter returned back without even sending word to his people although his home was not very far from the place where they were. When both these men returned to the Maharaj, the latter was very much surprised to see them, for he had forgotten the matter altogether, several days having passed in the meantime, and on knowing whence they had returned back, he asked Nath Bhakta why he did not send word to his people as he was so near to them. He also asked the other man why he did not return back sooner since he could not overtake Nath Bhakta closer to Gadhada, \* and they both replied that to obey his command was more important.

The following story might well find a place in this record to show what some of the disciples did and how much they suffered in order to do the will of their Master :

In the province of Cutch there were two Kunbis called Muljee and Krishnajeel who were devoted followers of the Maharaj. Among these Krishnajeel was the first to become a member of the Satsang. He once came to Gadhada

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\* The full significance of this story will be realized when it is known that the distance between Gadhada and Baroda is about 100 miles, and it would take at least three or four days to go on foot from one to the other.

and on his return said to his friend Muljee that he had been to Swami Narayana and that he found in him God Incarnate. To this Muljee replied: 'It must be a strange kind of God that could not keep you from leaving him. Either he is not God, or you have not known him properly. Otherwise you would not have come back.' To this Krishnajeel replied: 'I have known him to be sure.' Muljee replied: 'When you go to Gadhada next, take me with you so that I may know what the truth is.'

Some time after this they both went to Gadhada and as soon as Muljee saw the Maharaj, he was assured that Swami Narayana was God. Then they both made up their minds not to go home, whereupon their relations sent letters to Swami Narayana requesting him to send them back. When the Maharaj asked them to go back, they left, but instead of going home, they stopped on the way and engaged themselves in the service of one of the members of the Satsang. At the time of the next great festival, they went again to Gadhada and offered to the Maharaj whatever they had earned. On the latter's asking them where they were all this time, for he had received many letters from their relations concerning them, they told him where they were and added that they wanted to be Sadhus, and so under no circumstances they would go back to their homes. The Maharaj replied that in that case they would have to bring letters from their parents giving them permission to be Sadhus. They went home and asked their parents to give such letters, and on the latter refusing to do so even after much pressing, they made themselves eunuchs whereupon their parents sent them away.

These men then came to the Maharaj who, on knowing what they had done, not only refused to accept them, but even excommunicated them. Undaunted by this, they put on Sadhu's dress and began to live as Sadhus, having a look

at the Maharaj now and then from a distance. After living in this fashion for a year they came to the Master who again drove them away. Then they went to the river close to Gadhada and began to sing loudly songs of praise relating to the Maharaj at dead of night, on hearing which the latter sent some of his attendants to drive them away from there, saying that their songs drew his bedstead. The attendants did this, but they began to do the same again after going a little further, whereupon the Maharaj asked the attendants to send them away from the neighbourhood altogether. On seeing the attendants, they, however, said to them: "Look here, we are not people who would leave this place by force even if a hundred of you came. We want to know, however, what the Maharaj desires to do with us." The attendants carried this message to the Maharaj who, then, held a consultation with some of the Sadhus, saying: "They have been treated like dogs, but their faith has not been affected. What shall we do with them now?" Then they all said that they should be taken back as members of the Satsang which was done, and they were made Sadhus. Of these, Krishnajeel became in course of time the head of the Ahmedabad temple.

There was a disciple called Parvat Bhai of whom mention is made often in the literature of the Satsang as an ideal disciple. Swami Narayana himself speaks of him as such in his discourses. The following story shows what faith he had in the Master :

The Maharaj used to praise him often before his other disciples, and so the Kathi disciples of the Maharaj were curious to know him. Accordingly while once the Maharaj was returning from Junagadh with some of his Kathi disciples, Sura Khachar said: 'Maharaj, let us go to Agatrai to-day and see Parvat Bhai; we all desire it if you will

kindly take us there.' The Maharaj consented to this and they all came to Agatrai where Parvat Bhai welcomed them, seated the Maharaj and then sat down before him. The Kathis took the horses to the stables and then came and sat down by the Master. After some time Sura Khachar said: 'Parvat Bhai, these horses require fodder and we require food, bedding etc. We are your guests and so you cannot afford to sit quietly like this. Therefore please get up and do all the needful.' Upon this Parvat Bhai replied: 'Sura Khachar, how can I play the host in another's house? Here is the owner (pointing to the Master). Ask him and whatever he orders I shall do.' All this while the Maharaj was smiling under the cover of his handkerchief and he said: 'Sura Khachar, this is not Parvat Bhai's house; it is mine and you all are my guests.' Then he gave orders to Parvat Bhai to do various things necessary for the company. The latter then did everything to the entire satisfaction of everyone, and next morning when the Maharaj was ready to start, Parvat Bhai stood before him with folded hands and asked him what his orders were. To this the Maharaj said: 'You continue to live as I have commanded.' Then they all left. Then the Kathis saw and understood that Parvat Bhai did not look upon his house as his own, but looked upon it as that of the Maharaj and upon himself as a steward appointed thereunto. They also realized the difference between him and themselves.

The following story is remarkable for the intensity of the faith it illustrates:

In the village of Kathlal there lived a Brahmin woman of the name of Ram Bai. She was the only member of the Satsang in that place and her faith in the Lord was full. One day she was drawing water from a well when the Maharaj passed by the village with his party. As soon as Ram Bai came to know this, she went to the

Maharaj and prayed him to stay for one day in the place. As the Maharaj was not able to do this since he had important business elsewhere, she said: 'Maharaj, pray sanctify the water in this pail by touching it with your foot.' The Maharaj asked her what she would do with it, and she replied: 'I shall drink some of it and the rest I shall throw back in the well so that whosoever drinks of it will be your follower.' The Maharaj was much pleased with so great a faith on her part, and the party which included a few Kathis said to her: 'Blessed are you indeed for so great a faith in the Maharaj.' The Maharaj then touched the water as was desired by her at which she was greatly pleased, and after drinking some of it herself she threw the rest in the well of the village. As a result of this even to-day the people in that part of the village where the well is situated are believers.

We shall give here one most interesting story as it has a special charm of its own :

A man called Raja had great faith in the Maharaj. One day he took a vow not to take any food before he had seen the Maharaj and started from home for the purpose. He reached Gadhada on the sixteenth day and broke his fast only after he had offered worship to the Maharaj. Later on he left home altogether and lived with the Maharaj as a personal attendant. While he was living in this manner, more or less like a Sadhu, there came once to the Maharaj a woman disciple of his. She had lost her son recently, and so she requested the Maharaj to give her a man who might look after her affairs. The Maharaj asked her to take Raja Bhakta with her, and on departing when the latter asked the Maharaj what he should do with regard to his board, he replied: 'Feed yourself on a pound of flour every day.' Raja Bhakta followed this command so literally that he would not take even salt with it not to speak of anything else. Some time after both the lady and Raja

Bhakta came to see the Maharaj, when the lady expressed her full satisfaction with the work of Raja, but complained that he ate practically nothing. When the Maharaj asked him why he did this he replied: 'You have asked me to live on a pound of flour and I do it.' The Maharaj said that he did not mean it literally and that he was free to take *ghee* (clarified butter), treacle etc. with it.

The stories narrated in this chapter belong to a collection of many more which have been circulating in the body of believers ever since the events recorded in them took place, and are thus the common possession of the entire body. They have found their rightful place in the literature of the Satsang, and one comes across them in more places and connections than one. The names of all these men and women appear in the authentic teaching of Swami Narayana himself, and he often speaks of them as ideals of particular types of discipleship and character. It is persons such as these who have given this Fellowship its peculiar character, and raised it to a level all its own in the religious history of the world. Although these stories have no miraculous element in them, they were commended in the lifetime of Swami Narayana himself and have been since in the body because of their high moral and spiritual character. The exceptional devotion of these men and women that was inspired by the life and teaching of their Guru was the greatest miracle wrought, and it was believed as such from the first. It is relationships of this kind that represent the heart of the Satsang, and they supplied vital energies to the entire Fellowship.

## CHAPTER IX

### General Atmosphere of the Fellowship

It would be interesting to add a few more stories relating to the movement to show what kind of an atmosphere was generated in the movement by the remarkable personality of the Master. So far we have touched the miraculous element in the work of Swami Narayana only incidentally, but we shall have more of it in what we are going to relate in the present chapter, especially as it is an integral part of the movement. Supernaturalism of a very high order is the very life-breath of this Satsang, and in any true account of the life-story of Swami Narayana it must find its place. What we are going to relate here, however, is not by way of giving an account of the miracles of Swami Narayana as such, but is a side-view of his work in general. For example, here is a story which gives us some idea of the suffering and persecution undergone by some of the disciples :

Shobharam of Vishnagar with the help of Keshavram Desai excommunicated\* his nephew and some other Satsangis, who were members of his caste, for seven years. Once they were imprisoned through Keshavram whereupon the latter's aunt voluntarily joined the Satsangis in prison. Upon this Keshavram said to her: 'Why are you here with

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\*This was the worst form of social persecution which a man could undergo in those days. It was very like what the Christians suffered when the Church in medieval ages excommunicated them.



these people ?' To this she replied: 'Since you have imprisoned these because they are Satsangis, am I also not one of them ?' On Keshavram asking her to go home, she said: 'I shall go home only when all these go home and not before that.' Soon after all were released, and the old woman went home. Later on Motiram went to Gadhada and said to the Master: 'There are going to be two factions in our community, and if we are invited by both, which shall we join ?' The Maharaj replied: 'Join that which invites you first.' Later on when the Maharaj went to that place, he spent nearly five thousand Rs. to make peace between the two factions. Some time after Shobharam said to Motiram: 'Well, what can your Swami Narayana do to me ? Look here, although I have been working against him I am hale and hearty. If he be really powerful, why do I not become blind ?' Within four days he became blind; such is the perversion of human beings. But God is merciful, and so He does not look at man's sins. When the Maharaj came next to Vishnagar and while he was being taken in procession, seeing the house of Shobharam on the way, he got down from his horse and in order to do good to him, he called out: 'Where is Shobharam Vyas ? I have come to give you my *darshan*.\*' On hearing him coming, however, Shobharam hid himself in the house, and sent word that he was taking his meal. At this Swami Narayana returned.

Here is a story remarkable for the events it describes, and also for the observation made by the Master in connection with it:

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\**Darshan* means seeing. This is a word of much significance in Hinduism, for the very seeing of a man of God, an act which includes paying respects or offering worship, has much spiritual value. In the present case, it would have meant restoration of the man's lost sight.

Once while the Maharaj was engaged in one of his morning ablutions in Gadhada, there came a party of ten Brahmins. Seeing them the Maharaj asked some one to give them alms, whereupon they said that they had not come for alms but to take back a member of their family (the wife of one of them) who had taken refuge with the women of the Satsang. On inquiry she was found, whereupon the Maharaj called her and asked her to go back to her people. At this she remonstrated with the Master saying: 'Maharaj, why are you sending me back? I have no desire to live the life of the flesh or of the world, and for a whole year I have been living like a Sadhavi.' Then the Maharaj asked her: 'Have you no worldly desire whatsoever?' She said: 'No.' Then the Maharaj said, 'If you have no desire, God Almighty will protect you.' She went back to her lodging, and soon she got high fever. Within a few hours she was so ill that the Maharaj was called to give her his *darshan* for the last time, and she passed away as soon as this was done. Then the Maharaj said to the party which had come to take her back pointing to the body: 'You can take your part of her; we have taken ours.' They performed the cremation ceremony and left.

Here is another story which certainly deserves a place here:

A man called Abheram saw the Maharaj and on going home told his mother that he believed Swami Sahajananda to be the incarnation of God. He did this more than once, and so his mother said to him: 'Abheram, either Swami Sahajananda is not God, or you have not known him as such; otherwise how can you come back to the world leaving God?' Once while he was coming to Vartal to see the Maharaj, he took his mother with him. The old lady saw the Maharaj and she believed in him. On her return to her

lodging she got fever, and becoming worse she asked her son to make her see the Maharaj once more. Upon this Abheram came to the Maharaj and requested him to go to his mother with him. This was done and after the Maharaj had left she passed away.

This short talk full of meaning may well be added here :

Once the Maharaj was in Bhuj when some believers came from the villages round about to see him. They stayed for some days, and when they were about to leave they came to him and worshipping him said: 'Maharaj, have mercy upon us.' To this the latter replied: 'You too have mercy upon us.' They left and began to talk among themselves as to the meaning of what was said by the Maharaj. Not being able to find out what it was, they came back to the Maharaj, and asked him what he meant. To this question the Maharaj gave this reply: 'This body is five feet and a half in height and within it there is the heart in a very small space. It is there that I abide. Please keep it pure. If you choke it up with the desires of the flesh or the world, I shall not be able to stay there. This is the mercy I demand.'

Here is another story of a different kind :

The only son of Devjee Bhakta of Nempur died and so he thought within his mind: 'If I stay at home people will come to condole with me and I shall have to lament with them;' and so he went to his farm and stayed there. As for his wife he sent her away with some people to the Maharaj with a pot of *ghee* (clarified butter) which she carried on her head. When she came, the Maharaj was taking his meal and so she put the pot before him and said: 'Maharaj, your Bhakta has sent his respects.' To this the Maharaj replied: 'Is he happy? What is he doing?' Then she said: 'He was happy but has become more happy

now.' The Maharaj said: 'How so?' She replied: 'Maharaj, your Bhakta had one son and so he had some anxiety on that account, but now that you have taken him to your heavenly home, he has become blessed. Formerly he had some obstacle in devoting himself altogether to God, but now he will be freer to do so.' At this the Maharaj said to some of the Sankhya Yogi\* women who were there: 'Look here, you have shaved your heads and have taken the vow of ascetic life, but is not the renunciation of this woman greater than yours? She had an only son and when that son dies she is not sorrow-stricken, whereas you were grievously sorry over the death of an infant girl of Dada Khachar, and forgot to give me my cup of milk.' So saying he took some *ghee* from the pot and put it upon his piece of bread, and then gave from it to Swami Muktananda and others who were there.

Here is a story which has an interest all its own :

Second Narsimhananda Swami had taken a vow before he came to the Maharaj to offer worship to Krishna in some temple in Oudh for a period of twelve years. While he was there, an ascetic who had been to Dwarka for pilgrimage came there and said: 'In the West a Jeevan-Mukta has established a new Way, and he is called God. He is putting people in trance and is thus misleading many people.' Although this man was thus finding fault with the Satsang, because he mentioned the name of Swami Narayana, there was light in the temple although it was night. This light remained as long as that ascetic talked. Narsimhananda seeing this thought within himself: 'If such is the glory of his name, I am sure God Almighty has manifested Himself and I shall be left unsaved if I do

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\*The order of women corresponding to the Sadhus was called by this name.

not take refuge under him.' Then he left the place\* and came to Dwarka, and made inquiries there if a Prophet had arisen in those parts. Some one said: 'There is a prophet called Khaiya† in Mandvi.' Then he went to this man who on seeing him asked: 'Why have you renounced the world?' He replied: 'It is because I might find God. I have come to you knowing you to be a Prophet, and so please show God to me.' To this Khaiya replied: 'If you want the One Immanent Formless Impersonal God I can show Him to you, but if you want the Incarnate One you go to him who is at Gangaram's house in Bhuj.' Narsimhananda replied: 'I do not want the Immanent Omnipresent God; I want the Incarnate One.' Then he came to Gangaram's house and while going up the staircase he saw the Maharaj, and was thrown immediately in a trance. Seeing this the Maharaj at once cried out: 'Hold him, hold him lest he fall.' He was taken hold of and thus saved from falling, and when he came to himself he knew the supernatural glory of the Maharaj and became a Sadhu.

Here is a story remarkable for deep faith in the Master on the part of a man called Muljee Brahmchari who was a personal attendant of Swami Sahajananda for a large part of his ministry. This man was a disciple of Swami Ramananda who had given him the name of Mukandananda after ordaining him as a Sadhu, but he came to be known by his own name. He was respected throughout the Satsang for the great purity

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\*This place was more than a thousand miles off, and he came all the way to see the new Prophet of whom he had heard in this way.

†This man was a Vedantin of Shankar's school and had attained some reputation as a teacher. He was of the artisan class.

and simplicity of his character, and was altogether without guile. It was because of these virtues and great faith in the Master that he was engaged by the Master in his personal service.

Once Muljee Brahmachari was oiling his slippers when some one took them from him almost by force and began oiling them. The Maharaj passing by saw the man and asked him whose the slippers were. The man did not reply to this and as Muljee was near, the Maharaj guessed the truth and said: 'You, Muljee, you are making him oil your\* shoes?' To this he replied that they were taken from him by force. Then the Maharaj said: 'Putting on shoes is forbidden to you from to-day.' Muljee replied 'It is seven times so.' Later on finding some fault with him, the Maharaj forbade him the eating of *ghee* and treacle and removed him from his personal service, whereupon Muljee went to Dabhan and stayed with Ramdasbhai. When the mango season came, Ramdasbhai got the best of mangoes together and getting a basketful of them (nearly a maund and half)§ asked the people round about him: 'Who will take these to the Maharaj?' At this the Brahmachari said: 'I shall take them.' Accordingly he came to Gadhada carrying this big load barefooted in the hot weather. When he came to the Maharaj he laid the basket at his feet and paid respects to him. The Maharaj, however, did not say anything in reply. At this he went to the house of an old woman of the carpenter caste and made his lodging there. When she asked him why he was not seen all this time, he told her everything, whereupon she went to the Maharaj and said: 'How unmerciful you are !

\*Oiling of the shoes is done to make them soft. This is a mean office.

§About sixty pounds.

This poor Brahmachari has come from such a long distance with such a heavy load in this hot weather, and you did not say a word to him nor did you return his salute.' The Maharaj then asked her to look after him properly. On coming home she gave him flour, pulse, rice, *ghee*, treacle etc., but Muljee prepared only cakes of flour and ate them. On being asked why he did not take anything else, he said to her that *ghee* etc. was forbidden to him. Later on in the course of the day he took some juice out of a few mangoes for the Maharaj, and when the latter sat down for his meal, he kept on looking at Muljee who was in the same room with the juice. At this Muljee called out and said: 'Maharaj is eating *chapatis*\* alone and so give him this juice. If I give, he will not take it.' The Maharaj said: 'Brahmachari, you can give it.' This he did saying that he was always at the service of the Maharaj. From that day he was taken again in his former position by the Maharaj. The moral of this story is that however much one should suffer insult, one should never leave the Satsang.

Here is one more story which is too fine to be missed, and it may well serve as a crown to this collection :

Once the Maharaj was seated on a platform in Loya, and there were seated before him many Sadhus and believers. At that time there came a Brahmin who was very old. His clothes too were old and tattered, and his whole body was trembling. He stood at a distance facing the Maharaj, and was looking for something in his turban which was very old and almost in rags. When the Maharaj saw him, he untied the knot in his turban, and holding something in his hand he wanted to come forward. Seeing this the Maharaj said to the people assembled : ' Make way for him

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\*Chapatis are thin cakes of wheat flour.

to come near.' Then he advanced and gave the Maharaj the silver coin which he held in his hand. The Maharaj seeing this said to him : ' Where did you get this rupee from ? ' He replied : ' I carried a message for some one and this was my wage. ' The Maharaj said : ' Why did you not buy a new turban with it since your present one is all torn ? ' The man replied : ' If I had bought a turban, I would not have been able to make any offering to you. I have no other money and this turban of mine does serve its purpose. ' Then the Maharaj said to Swami Muktananda : ' Swami, is there anything left to be done by this Brahmin for his salvation ? ' Muktananda replied that he had done all that was necessary and was completely justified.



## CHAPTER X

### Miracles

No life of Swami Narayana could be complete without some mention of the miracles he performed. They form an integral part of the various records and biographies that have come down from his own times and have been written since. In the Satsang they are taken for granted, and they testify to the supernatural character of his person, even his divinity and Deity. As a matter of fact, the entire atmosphere of this movement is soaked with Supernaturalism of a very high order. So much so is this the case that the present writer knows no religious movement, whether in the East or the West, which is so full of Supernaturalism. Nevertheless it must be said here that Miracles proper, although their number is legion and they are said to have been performed not only by Swami Narayana but by some of his disciples as well, play but a secondary role, and only a minor importance has been given to them in the teaching, traditions and literature of the Fellowship. This is just in consonance with the belief in regard to miracles in Hinduism in general. The Hindus as a people have always believed in miracles, but they do not occupy a very significant place in the religious life of the people. Their place is more on the circumference than in the centre.

We have already touched in passing the miracles wrought by Swami Narayana in his childhood and

boyhood. As a matter of fact very little else is recorded of this period in his life. Compared to the miracles said to have been wrought in the course of his ministry, these look apocryphal, and there is a marked difference between these two series. They are certainly of a later growth, for Swami Narayana was very reticent about his early life, and he was the last person to mention these miracles which are attributed to him. The stories of his childhood grew later on after his family members had come to these parts at his invitation, and evidently they were told by some of his relations who read back his glory.

Next to these in point of time are the phenomena of Samadhi which, though supernatural, form a class by themselves. These miracles, if we may call them so, are to be found all through the period of Swami Narayana's ministry. We have already given some account of them, and they went undoubtedly far in creating the faith in him as a divine being. In the literature of the movement we find innumerable examples of men and women who had this experience, in consequence of which their faith was either established for the first time or was deepened. We have also an indirect testimony to this from the mouth of Swami Narayana himself, who is reported to have said that he had one defect, viz., he had never put Swami Muktananda and Swami Gopalauanda in this kind of trance. We have also another testimony to this as well as to other Miracles, and a very important one too, and this is from the unbelievers who had given Swami

Narayana the name "*Jadugara*" i. e. magician. It is interesting to observe that this great Teacher was given two names by the outside world viz., *Jeevan Mukta* i. e. one who is perfect or has attained perfection, and *Jadugara*, i.e. magician. Perhaps the former was used by those who were well-disposed towards him whereas the latter was in use among those who were antagonistic to his work. In any case both these names show that the people had found something extraordinary in the person and work of this new Teacher.

Next to this kind of miracles of Samadhi are the visions of Swami Narayana seen by his followers at the time of their leaving their body, which also are a class by themselves in significance as well as number. They are altogether unique, and there is very little like them in any other religious movement of the world. They are so wonderful and of such spiritual importance that we shall have to devote a special chapter to them. These constitute one of the chief glories of this Fellowship. We have the mention of such visions in what is perhaps the first book written under the inspiration of Swami Narayana as early as Samvat 1860, i.e. only a couple of years after he had begun his independent ministry, and they occur even to-day at a distance of more than a century since Swami Narayana left this world for what is called his Home or Mansion.

There are innumerable stories related in connection with Swami Narayana of his reading the mind and thoughts of various people. Many people are said

to have come to him with the idea of testing him or his divine powers by way of his telling them something that they had pre-conceived. This was done by no means in a direct manner, for Swami Narayana was too big a man to be asked a question which was meant openly to test his powers. In most of these stories, the men who came are said to have thought something like this in their mind, e. g. if Swami Narayana welcomed them in a particular manner, or called them by their names without knowing them, or asked beforehand for a particular offering which they had brought for him, they would believe in his divine powers. Several people are said to have become believers in him after they had this experience. We can make room for one of these stories here :

Once in Budhej Gokulbhai Gadhvi was a guest of Durbar Khodabhai when the father of the latter said to him : ' What to do now ? In my family there are two kinds of worship. I get up early in the morning and worship Rama, whereas my son takes the name of Swami Narayana. ' At this Gokul said : ' Let us go to Vartal and test Swami Narayana. If he does according to what we have in mind, he is God indeed, and we both shall join his Satsang. ' To this the other consented and they both went to Vartal. What they wanted to find in Swami Narayana was this, viz., that when they went to him he should be sitting facing the east, that he should call them both by their personal names and ask them to sit close to him, and that he should be reading the Bhagwata keeping the book before him on a black blanket. When they reached the place the next morning, the Maharaj was sitting on a platform near the bank of the river Gomti facing the east, and he called them

both by their names and asked them to come and sit near him. At this they both thought within their mind: 'He has proved himself to be half God indeed.' Soon after the Maharaj asked Muljee Brahmachari to bring the Bhagwata to him, and lo! the book was brought in a black blanket and the Maharaj began to read it. At this Khodabhai's father got up and worshipped the Maharaj, and the latter asked him why he did this. He said in reply, 'Maharaj, we had taken you to be half God, but now you have proved yourself to be wholly God, because you have done just as we had thought. Now please make us disciples.' Then the Maharaj sending for some water administered to them the vows, and they both went home after staying there two or three days more and hearing the words of the Maharaj. From that day there was only one belief in Khodabhai's family.

There are innumerable cases of casting out devils. In the days we are talking of people everywhere believed in such spirits, and the possession of people by these was a phenomenon but too common. It is but natural, therefore, that Swami Narayana and even his disciples should have been required to cast out these, and they did it with the greatest ease. Some of these spirits were very powerful and there were others working together as in a legion, but they all yielded at once to the spiritual power of the Master and of some of his disciples. The most remarkable part of these stories concerning the casting out of devils is that they too are shown mercy, and are sent usually to Badrikashram, which is considered by this Fellowship to be the place for Penance and is thus a sort of Purgatory. Swami Narayana's mission in life

was to save souls, as many of them as possible, and, therefore, even these evil spirits were not beyond the reach of the infinite mercy which was the chief virtue of the Master. One or two stories of this kind might well be given here :

Once the Maharaj was in Vartal. At that time a Brahmin in a village close by was possessed by a Brahm-Rakshash. His friends had done much to cast out the evil spirit but it was all in vain, and the man was nearing death. Then one of the disciples told his friends that the Maharaj was in Vartal, and that if they took the man to him he might be cured. They brought him then in a carriage to the Maharaj, who was at that time seated on the veranda of the Mandir. On their telling him what the matter was, he asked them to bring the man up. They did this, and the Maharaj asked the man to bow down to the Sadhus who were there. He did this and bowed down to the Maharaj also. The Maharaj then asked his friends to make him stand just opposite to him which they did, whereupon the Maharaj asked the man to look at him. He did this and was at once led in a trance. When he came to his senses, the Maharaj asked him what he saw. He said that he saw a great light. The Master then asked him to look at him again. He did this and had another trance. On his coming out of it he was again asked what he saw and the reply was : ' In the light that I had seen first I saw you as you are sitting here, and also all these Sadhus and Hari-Bhaktas as they are seated here. ' Then the Master said to him : ' Your Brahm-Rakshash\* is gone now but take care lest you become one yourself. ' The Brahmin then took the vow

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\*This is supposed to be one of the worst kinds of evil spirits. A Brahmin gone too far on the wrong path becomes such an evil spirit.

of discipleship, gave a dinner to the Sadhus, became a Matsangi and went home cured. The Maharaj saved also the Brahm-Rakshash.

Here is another story which reveals how Swami Narayana treated such spirits:

There was a Brahmin called Ishwar in Mundha who was possessed by a Brahm-Rakshash. This spirit gave him much pain and would not leave him for a single moment. The family of the man thus possessed had the Scriptures read in order to exorcise him, but the evil spirit would repeat verse for verse and argue but would not go under any circumstances. Then they brought the man to the Maharaj in Jetalpur when the spirit told the Master: 'Maharaj, since this Brahmin has come to you I cannot live in him any more, but where shall I go?' The Maharaj replied: 'You come and live in me.' This the spirit declined. Then the Master said: 'You live in these Sadhus.' This also he refused to do, whereupon the Master said: 'Now you go to Badrikashram and there worship NarNarayana.' The spirit went there and the Brahmin became all right.

There are a series of miracles reported in which the Master supplied the lack of *ghee* (clarified butter) and other things in connection with the great Sacrifices. On some of these occasions when owing to various causes such as the gatherings of people being larger than previously arranged for, or obstacles from mischief-makers, Swami Narayana supplied the immediate need in a miraculous manner. We might well give at least one of the stories of this kind here:

In one of the Sacrifices at Dabhan ghee was not enough and what was sent for did not come in time. Knowing this the Brahmins, who were engaged to perform the Sacrifice

but who were secretly inimical to the Satsang, thought within their minds : " Now is the time to spoil this Sacrifice and make Swami Narayana fail in this great work of his. " With this idea in their mind these wicked Brahmins came early in the morning and began to cry out for ghee, and also say in an insolent manner : " If you did not have the means, why did you start so great a Sacrifice ? " Seeing all this, Muljee Bhai who was in charge of the commissariat went at once to the Maharaj. The latter was holding a meeting at this time and so he said to him : " I want to say something. " The Maharaj said : " Say out whatever you have to say. " To this Muljee replied that he could not do it in the meeting, and asked the Maharaj to go aside. This the Maharaj did and Muljee told him everything, adding, that in a couple of hours the Brahmins would proclaim the failure of the Sacrifice. Then the Maharaj went to the store room and asked whether there was any ghee left. Muljee replied that there were two bottles\* in which there was some ghee left, in one about fifty pounds and in the other about twenty pounds. Then the Maharaj said : " Start giving from these two bottles, and let no one come to this place. Only those of you who are in charge of ghee should remain here. " The Maharaj then went back to the meeting. Then they brought two big bottles, each capable of holding two hundred pounds close to these two which were placed on a stand, and began pouring ghee into them from these latter. These big bottles would get filled while hardly a couple of pounds of ghee came out from the other two bottles, and they began to pass on these bottles full of ghee to the Brahmins. At this the Brahmins were very much surprised and began to talk among themselves : " Whence did Swami Narayana get this ghee ? " Some said that Swami Narayana did everything to perfection and that he had all this ghee

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\*These are made of leather to keep ghee in.



stored up carefully against such a contingency, and others said that he had brought water from the tank and made it into ghee. They began talking in this way, but neither their jealousy nor their wickedness could avail them in any way, and the Maharaj finished the Sacrifice without any difficulty. The story is finished.

Similar to these are the miracles of supplying the need of many of his followers during the terrible famine of the year Samvat 1869, a famine which was one of the worst known in these parts. Swami Narayana is said to have warned most of his disciples by word as well as circular letters which he sent round in the year preceding the approach of this famine, asking them to sell away all their cattle and buy grain enough to last them for a year. Some followed this advice and some did not, and Swami Narayana helped these in various ways. To some he pointed out different ways and means so that they might earn money enough to maintain themselves, and in a few cases he is said to have saved whole families by performing miracles.

There are many stories related wherein Swami Narayana is reported to have brought rain in particular places. There are also many miracles of saving some of his disciples from great difficulties and possible death at the hands of robbers, or from fire or from shipwreck etc.; and there are, besides, any number of supernatural appearances of Swami Narayana to his disciples given for various purposes. The literature of the movement is full of these, but the following might be given here as one of the most remarkable of these :

Once Swami Narayana was in Agatrai where he received invitations from two places called Akha and Piplana to go to them. He promised that he would go to both of them. Now the road to both of these places bifurcated at some distance from Agatrai, and at this point there were people from both of them to welcome him. Both these parties were so insistent that none would yield to the other. They had also prepared a dinner for the Maharaj and his party, and so they were naturally anxious that the Maharaj should go to their place. This was a real dilemma and it was impossible to satisfy both of them. The Maharaj then asked the people from Piplana who had come to receive him to go ahead, saying that he would follow them soon. And this is what he actually did with his company of several men. As for the other party that had come from Akha, the Maharaj and his party went with them from the point of bifurcation of the road. Thus it so happened that the Maharaj and his party were actually in both these places at the same time, while the Satsangis of each place thought that he was with them only. It was only when people from one of these places went to the other that they came to know of the great wonder that had taken place. The Maharaj performed this miracle for some days, and then said to people in both the places that as he had to perform Vishnu-yag (a Sacrifice), he would go to the bank of the river Ojat which was close by and stay there. He left the two places followed by the people from both of them, and as the two processions proceeded from different sides to one place on the bank of the river, the double figures of the Maharaj and others with him merged, and all knew what had happened. Swami Narayana stayed in this place on the bank for six months and performed the Vishnu-yag.

The blind are also healed as the following will show:

Once the Maharaj was in Limbli and was staying with Muljee Bhai. While he was seated on a cot in the courtyard, he saw a blind woman. Asking Muljee who she was, he learnt that she was his wife, and said: "It is very unfortunate to be blind and much more so in the case of women who have to do household work and deal with fire etc." Muljee replied: "What to do! There are so many who are blind and they must do their work" Then the Maharaj said: "It would indeed be nice if she could see a little." Muljee said: "Undoubtedly so." Just then Muljee's wife called him inside and on his going in told him: "I am able to see everything." Coming out he said this to the Maharaj who replied: "Now she will be able to see all her life."

Even the dead are raised as for example in the following story :

There was a Brahmin called Pranvallabha who lived in the city of Ahmedabad. He was a Satsangi and was a good devotee. He got apoplexy, and it was so bad that he passed away very soon. His spirit was then taken by the Maharaj, and while they were on the way, the Maharaj asked him whether he had anything on his mind. To this he replied that while dying he had not told any one that he was being taken by the Master, and therefore people would take him to be like any other. Then the Maharaj told him to enter his body again and tell his people what he wanted to say. Meantime his body was taken to the crematorium, and it was there that he entered it. There was a slight movement in the body which was already placed on firewood about to be kindled, and seeing this they took the body down. He then sat up to the amazement of all, and told them that he had come back from the Mansion of the Maharaj only to ask them that Death would overwhelm everyone of them, and that they would be saved

only by following Swami Narayana. He then asked them to sing the name of Swami Narayana with the accompaniment of clapping, and joining them in that way, he left his body to the great wonder of all who were present.

There are not many cases of healing diseases recorded in this literature, for the followers took both sickness and death for granted, and what they wanted was spiritual and not physical release. As a matter of fact there are very few instances in which people actually asked for miraculous help from Swami Narayana in the entire range of the literature of the Satsang, and whatever miracles were performed were the outcome of the Master's own free choice. On the other hand to look for miracles was considered an evil thing, and it showed only an evil heart behind. We are told of people who asked him for signs and miracles—people who were unbelievers and the Master invariably refused to show anything of the kind. In two or three cases his reply was very characteristic. For example, in one place the people asked him for a sign, and his reply was that the sign they needed would be given to them by an ascetic of the place in whom they had faith. In six months' time this man left the place with the daughter of the man who was foremost in demanding a sign from Swami Narayana. There are two or three cases of this kind recorded in this literature.

On the contrary, in the lifetime of Swami Narayana himself and later on, the followers of this faith have always considered the greatest of all miracles to

be a life without sin or spot. This is the only miracle worth performing and knowing, and to look for any other signifies not only lack of faith but a vicious and adulterous bent of mind. Miracles, therefore, have always played a secondary part in the life of this Fellowship.

Another peculiarity of these miracles is that almost invariably Swami Narayana gives some cause other than himself for them. For example, when he turns sea-water into fresh water to slake the burning thirst of a disciple—there are several cases of this—he says that it is due to the coming in of some current of fresh water in the particular place or the sea itself; or when he raised a woman after she had been dead, he said that she was not dead and that human beings did not die so easily. To those who asked for his favor so that they might have prosperity etc., his answer was that his favor was such as would make them say of their own accord that they did not want it. As for instance, a man asked him again and again for his favor when his reply was that he was better as he was, for his real favor meant poverty, worldly trouble, death of kith and kin etc., so that the world may be distasteful to him and he might set his heart on God alone.

It is singular that miracles have no place in the book called Vachanamrit, i. e. Discourses, a book which contains the doctrine of the Satsang as it was taught by Swami Narayana himself. In that book and

in later tradition true knowledge of the doctrine and attainment of a pure and holy character, a new type of holiness as they believed it to be, are considered the most or the only important things necessary for salvation, and even Samadhi is considered of secondary importance. In connection with all this, the following conversation that is said to have taken place between Swami Narayana and his disciples is of very great interest. Once he said to them :

I have not done any such deeds as were done by other Incarnations. I have not built the bridge over the sea nor killed the ten-headed Ravana as was done by Shri Ramohandra; I have not raised the mountain nor killed wicked people like Kansa and Shishupal as Shri Krishna did. Why do you then regard me as God ?

To this they replied :

It is true Rama killed Ravana but the latter was already killed by his lust and pride; Vamana cheated Bali but the latter was already cheated by his covetousness; Krishna killed Kansa etc., but they were already killed by their evil deeds. It is because you have destroyed our inner enemies such as lust, pride, covetousness etc., we look upon you as God Incarnate. It is true you have not built the bridge over the sea, but you have built a way between this world and Heaven. It is true you have not raised such mountains as Mandrachala or Govardhana, but you have lifted the mountains of our sin in a moment, and made us holy. That is why we look upon you as God.

The age of miracles for this movement did not end with the passing away of the Master. The man who is credited with performing a number of these is

**Gopalananda Swami** who was appointed as the head of the entire body by Swami Sahajananda after him. He was a Yogi in his own right, the only one in the body besides the Master, and as such had developed remarkable powers. Other Sadhus also are said to have performed miracles, and only a year or two back there was a case of remarkable healing of a woman who was about to be blind, and who was thus saved from blindness.

## CHAPTER XI

### Miscellanea

In this chapter we want to make room for some characteristic stories concerning Swami Narayana. These are stories which have no special relation to one another, nor to any particular subject, while they reveal the general character of the movement. There is no end of such stories in the literature of the Fellowship. In fact every incident in his life is related as a story provided there was somebody present who was able and devoted enough to relate it, and all these stories have deep spiritual significance for his followers. They rarely use in regard to him the term Lila, which has been so commonly used by other Vaishnavas in India, and they relate these incidents very much in the same way as has been done in the case of Jesus in the Gospels. Everything that the Master did had the reflection of his personality in it, and as such it was a kind of his portraiture. It is beyond the scope of the present work to describe Swami Narayana's life in this way, and all that we can do is to give only such stories as are characteristic and have some special significance. We may also add that most of the stories that we have given in this book are such as have found undoubtedly a more important place than the rest in the mind of the general body of believers, and as such their value is decidedly greater.

Swami Narayana was a remarkable judge of human character, and he had a way all his own of



testing, training and rewarding his disciples. The following is as good an illustration of this as any:

Aksharananda Swami was at first a Kshatriya of Moda. When he came to the Maharaj to be a Sadhu, the latter asked him, "Do you want to do as I please or as you please?" He replied that he would do as the Maharaj pleased. Then the Maharaj said: "Go and plough the farm of Kashidas of Bochasan." Aksharananda obeyed this command of the Maharaj with very great pleasure, and ploughed the farm of Kashidas for three years. Then the Maharaj called him, and ordaining him a Sadhu, made him straightaway the head of the Vartal Mandir.\* Seeing this Paramchaitanyananda became jealous, and complaining that a man who was made a Sadhu only the previous day was given such a position, started for Jetalpur in anger. With him also started ten Sadhus who belonged to his group and so he said to them, "Why do you leave?† I must do so because I feel that my right has been overlooked, but as for you, there is no cause to go, and there is no salvation anywhere else." When the Maharaj heard this, he said that the man who turned them back was a true Bhakta, whereas the others were without understanding.

The following well illustrates how keen Swami Narayana was in regard to matters of obedience on the part of Sadhus to their immediate superiors or to his own commands:

\*This was then the biggest temple in the Satsang, and is so still. That he should have been made the head of this place in this way shows the confidence the Master put in him.

†It must be said here that he did not want to leave the Satsang.

Muktananda Swami wanted to send me\* to the Maharaj from Surat, and when he looked round for a companion for me, one Sadhu said, "I want to go, and shall go whether you will or not." Upon this Muktananda Swami said, "Alright, you can go." We both left and came to the Maharaj. On seeing us the Maharaj embraced me and he did this as many times as I mentioned the names of believers who sent their worshipful regards through me. Then I thought that the Maharaj might have got tired, and so deliberately took time to remember other names, whereupon the Maharaj said "Now, You have forgotten." Then the other Sadhu came forward, but the Maharaj did not embrace him and said, "Since you came disobeying the command, who would have come for you if you had died on the way?"† Then I requested the Maharaj to meet him as he had come with me, whereupon the Maharaj embraced him and said: "I do this to please you but I find this hard to do, whereas I did not find it so even when I embraced you twenty-two times."

Here is a parable in regard to obedience which is very apt and beautiful indeed:

The Maharaj gave the parable of kite-flying, and said that whosoever obeyed his command, was near him even though he may be far off, and he had to protect him wherever he was, just as a man flying a kite keeps the thread in his hand all the time, and thereby protects and guides it.

\*This was Swami Gunatitanandjee. Most of the stories in this chapter are from those related by him.

†This refers to the deep-rooted belief in this body that the Master came to take his followers when they passed away. This belief was there even when he was living.

The peculiarity of this Sampradaya is that while it is Bhakti Marga, i.e. the way of devotion, it imposes a very strict discipline upon its followers, and is very particular in regard to implicit obedience to it. In this it differs much from many of the Vaishnava Sampradayas which, like certain schools of Christianity, believe in justification by devotion or faith alone. In this way the present movement was saved from being sentimental or emotional, and there was altogether no room in it for antinomianism of any kind. To keep the doctrine and practice of love for God unsullied seemed to be the one mission of Swami Narayana's life, and for this purpose he hedged it round with a Rule of life which has the same place in the mind of his followers as the practice of Bhakti itself. The result of this was that Swami Narayana as well as many of his disciples stand out like solid rocks of character in which both holiness and love are built in equal proportions. This was true not only of many Sadhus but of laymen and laywomen too, and all these were closest to his heart. Here is a story of one such layman:

The Maharaj used to remember the believers on his beads, and once when some of these were being praised before him, on Devjee Bhakta's name being mentioned, the Maharaj said "He is the right man." Once Kripananda Swami and myself went to the village of Devjee Bhakta. We finished our scriptural reading and talk at midnight, but still Devjee Bhakta would not go. Upon this we said to him, "Devjee Bhakta, you are a farmer and as such a very busy man: therefore you must have been exhausted

by now, and so you can go home and rest." To this he replied, "I have still to go to the farm, and on returning from there I shall sit in meditation, and then when the sleep will come and stand before me at a distance I shall call it near and then it will come. But you have walked much to-day and therefore you must have been tired: so you can now sleep and I shall go." The Maharaj used to remember only such men on his rosary. If any one else who was not so great a devotee as this were mentioned, the Maharaj would say, "He has no place on this rosary."

The main purpose of the imposition of discipline was the creation of character. Swami Narayana had learnt this in his early days in the school of Yoga, the principal aim of which is to train the will of man. The following will let us into the secret of how he trained his disciples, although the story refers to an animal:

There was a mare in Nagadka which used to kick at people. In order to make this animal give up her evil habit, the Maharaj took a big bamboo and touched with it her hind legs. At this the mare kicked. The Maharaj continued to do this again and again so that the entire morning was spent in this, and he would not leave her even for his mid-day meal until some one came forward to do this while he took his meal. On returning he continued to do the same until the evening when the mare, completely tired out, gave up kicking. In this way she was cured of her habit.

Here is a story which shows how particular Swami Narayana was in practising what he preached:

In Varvala a believer gave the Maharaj a place belonging to his brother for lodging, and he went out to get some food for the Maharaj and his companions. Meantime

the brother of the man came, and not being a believer asked the company with whose permission they had lodged there. Upon this the Maharaj said, "We have broken our own command given in the book Siksha-Patri, and so let us leave the place immediately. They all left and went to Navda. The day was very warm, and the button of the vest of the Maharaj being lost, his skin became red, and I still remember it. The book Shiksha-Patri contains lessons regarding even such little things as spitting etc., and we all should observe it faithfully.

We shall give one instance of forbearance and forgiveness practised by the Sadhus under this discipline.

In Kharagundran a mendicant threw his slipper at Atmananda Swami whereupon the latter picking it up went to the man and gave it back to him. Then the man wanted to beat him again with the same, but the people who were close by prevented him from doing it.

The following will show that Swami Narayana not only practised what he preached, but he led the example in all those things which were found at first by some of the disciples to be of a very strange character. This is what is said about him in this connection:

The Maharaj himself showed the way by doing himself the things which he wanted others to do. It was in Tera that the Maharaj said that the Sadhus should beg cooked food. Govind Swami, however, was very much against it. So the Maharaj himself went to beg, mixed together whatever food was thus given and ate it. It was then that others did the same. He did the same again later on when the chapter of grinding grain was introduced. He did this again when the Mandirs were to be built.

A word must be said about these chapters as they are called in the phraseology of the Sampradaya. There were about a hundred of them in all, big and small, during the course of his ministry, and these were introduced as so many different steps in the discipline. Some of these were of major importance, while others had a minor significance and were of short duration. In all probability there were only a few of these that were meant for the entire body of Sadhus, while a number of them were meant to meet particular needs of certain groups and had their origin in local conditions. We shall make room, however, for a couple of circular letters of Swami Narayana to show how he tried to bring out the best within his disciples by introducing some of these chapters. One of these is as follows:—

Shree Swami Sahajanandjee is true. To the revered and noble Paramhansas, the Brahmcharis and Samkhaya Yogi men and women in the noble fellowship in various places from His Holiness Sahajanandjee of Anirdesh,\* with compliments. The purpose of this letter is to ask you to live as described in the story of King Rantideva. The story is as follows:— King Rantideva was the son of King San-kriti and was such that his praises are sung in both this world and the next until now. This Rantideva was a great philanthropist and so he gave away all his wealth. In consequence he became so poor that he had nothing left for himself or for his family, and they all began to starve. However he did not lose his patience nor his resolution to

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\*This is a little hard to translate. It means what transcends time and space.

serve others at all costs. They passed forty days without food or drink after which period he got some food and drink. As they were about to partake of this there came a poor Brahmin beggar. On seeing him Rantideva gave him with great delight a part of the food he had with him. Soon after this man had gone, as they were about to partake of the food that was left, there came another beggar who was of the Sudra caste. Rantideva gave a part of the food to him. Then again there came another beggar of a still lower caste, a man who had moreover some dogs with him. These were starving and the man asked food for himself as well as for them. So Rantideva gave away all the food he had, and the only thing that remained with him was water. As he and his family were about to drink this, there came a Chandal,\* and as he was dying of thirst, with humility he asked for the water that King Rantideva had. On hearing this request, the king was much touched and said to him, "I do not desire great spiritual glory or powers, nor even salvation. I only pray God that I may take upon myself the suffering of all creatures by entering into their spirits. I want them thus to be free from their misery. Since you need this water to save yourself, on giving it to you I am freed from hunger, thirst, trouble, travail etc." Saying this, the merciful king gave that jug of water to that Chandal. After this he was tempted in many ways, but he did not allow himself to be conquered by these temptations, with the result that he and his family were accepted as great devotees of God.†

Similarly if you have anything to eat and any one who needed it came to you, you should give it to him: the same should be done with water. This is our command in

\*One who is beyond the pale of caste.

†This story might well be compared with the Parable of the good Samaritan.

regard to these two things, viz., food and water. You should read this letter before taking your meal, and any one among you who takes his food without such a feeling eats dirt instead of food, and drinks wine\* instead of water. Whether you live in this way or not, God will be watching you, and so do not deceive Him. My compliments to you all.

Here is another :—

The purpose of this letter is to tell you that if you get angry with one another while talking or arguing about anything, or in regard to giving or taking of things, or in regard to teaching some one, or in the matter of building up your circle of disciples, or with the sadhus who may be personally attending on you, or while teaching or learning from some one, or while travelling, or due to hunger or thirst, or due to some criticism from some one, or with some one who may have broken one of the five main commands, or with one who may have insulted you, or due to jealousy, in short if you get angry with any one for whatever cause, whosoever you be, whether Sad-Guru,† Guru or a sadhu, then you should bow down at full length before him with whom you may have become angry, whosoever he be. You should do this without touching his feet, and try to please him with soft and sweet words uttered in all humility. If the person who has thus been angry be a Sad-Guru and one who is the object of such anger be a veritable novice of a sadhu, even then the Sad-Guru should bow down to him while the junior should not return such homage but remain seated holding the image of God within his spirit. This is our command, and whosoever will not obey but return such homage will sin against the command. If both have been angry with one another, then after the

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\*Wine here stands for something which is an abomination.

†This was one who was the head of several groups of Sadhus, while a Guru was the head of a single group.



first one has finished paying his homage, the other should return it. In case any one has a guilty thought or feeling towards another, he should confess it to him and beg his pardon in all humility. The same holds true even if you have been angry with laymen. With whomsoever you may have been angry, you should bow down to him and beg his pardon in extreme humility forgetting all thoughts of your rank and position, and looking upon such a person as an embodiment of our Lord Nar Narayana. You should not look to the flesh and to the differences in age or rank or position etc., and if one entertains such thoughts while bowing down, he should bow down as many times more as he has had these thoughts.

Our Lord Nar Narayana cherishes neither anger nor pride, and so we of the Uddhava Sampradaya should not harbour these. Therefore whosoever will expiate the sin of anger in the way I have described, with him will abide Nar Narayana, and his heart will be pure. All his sins such as lust, anger, jealousy etc., will be destroyed. Whosoever will not expiate this sin of anger in the way described here is not a Paramhansa but a snake. Circulate this letter among all the Sadhus and Munis.

Among many things that Swami Narayana did to preserve the high moral tone of the Sadhus, one was to take guarantee from one for the proper observance of the rules on the part of another. This was not done all the time, however, though it formed one of the chapters of discipline.

Another remarkable characteristic of this Fellowship was the mutual co-operation that existed between the laymen and the sadhus in matters spiritual as well as secular with the result that the movement gained a

great deal thereby. The building of the large number of Mandirs, big and small, was entirely due to this co-operation. Swami Narayana himself was the originator of this co-operation, evidences of which are found everywhere in the history of the Fellowship. Here is an example of it :—

Once the Maharaj went to Agatrai and stayed there with Parvatbhai. When he was about to leave the place he said to Narayana Bhatt: "Come with us to Gadhada to celebrate the coming festival." The man replied "Millet has just ripened in my field and so if I go with you now I shall miss the harvest-time and consequently the millet would be spoiled." Then the Maharaj asked him if he would go in case they all helped him in reaping it just then. On his consenting to do this, the Maharaj sent for scythes, and when they had about thirty or forty of them, the Maharaj went with the sadhus, attendants and the Kathis to the farm, and they all began to reap so that in a short time they finished the business thus leaving Narayana Bhatt free to go to Gadhada. When somebody asked Swami Gunatitanandjee whether the Maharaj himself had taken a scythe and reaped with it, he said that he had and added that he himself was one of the party too.

The following well illustrates how at the back of all this discipline and everything that was done by the Master and his principal disciples was a great love-love of a father and a mother—for the entire body and the whole world. Here is a little story to illustrate this:—

Once Muktananda Swami went to Bhandara when a Sadhu on seeing him dropped some loaves. At this Muktananda Swami thought within himself: "A Sadhu is called a Janani (mother), but I must have been seen as a Jama

( messenger of death ), and hence this Sadhu has dropped these loaves, " He then said that he was hungry and asked for whatever food there was in the house. Some very coarse food was brought to him, and he began eating it sharing it with others.

The story reveals the extraordinary sensitiveness on the part of Swami Muktanandjee to the fact that he had awakened a sense of fear or nervousness in this Sadhu, and this was according to his idea a kind of violation of the principle of Ahimsa. It ran counter to his ideal of what a true Sadhu should be, an ideal which he wanted to realize within himself. As has been said elsewhere, Swami Muktananda was the biggest person after the Master in the Fellowship, and it was from a sort of nervousness born of respect mingled with awe that the Sadhu dropped the loaves, and the Swami felt that it was the wall between himself and the other Sadhus that was responsible for this. Hence the request for food and the common meal. It was in such atmosphere of discipline, mutual co-operation and good-will, and above all of love, deep love for God and man, that Swami Narayana and his followers lived and worked.

## CHAPTER XII

### Some Sayings and Parables

The present chapter is devoted to some of the sayings of Swami Narayana as they come to us from one of his principal disciples. These are not his Precepts as such nor his regular teaching : none the less they reveal the inner life of the great teacher and the movement he led. They are in a way the very core of the Sampradaya and have sprung from its innermost spirit. We have made no attempt to harmonize these into any system though they all hold together and form a unity, and we shall give them as we find them strewn here and there in the talks of Swami Gunatitananda. The sayings recorded here are not all of the Master, but most of them tell us what the Master said or did.

x x x x

It was in the latter part of the year 1859 of the Samvat era ( 1803-4 A. D. ) that I saw the Maharaj for the first time, and we looked at each other for some time, and I believed and all my misery was at an end and the pain of my heart was gone. I understood the glory, and all that I needed to do was done.\*

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The Maharaj sent a letter from Tera to the effect that " all, Sadhus as well as Satsangis, should

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\*There is a very close parallel between this and the experience of St. John as given in St. John's Gospel I 35-42.

remain for one month in a year with Swami Mukta-nanda and hear his talks, and women should do the same with "elder women\*", and that those who did not do this would suffer spiritual harm and be bound by the world."

Shrijee Maharaj taught the Sadhus keeping them with him for eight months at Sarangpur, Kariani, Loya, Panchola etc. Whenever any group of Sadhus came to him after finishing their round, he would keep them for a fortnight or a month, and teach them. It is only thus that one can attain knowledge and in no other way.

Shrijee Maharaj used to say "A shephard who tends a flock of cattle such as sheep, goats, or a herd of cows, etc., thinks that all such cattle are animals and he alone among them is a human being. In the same way, the believer in God should feel that all those who do not believe in God are animals and he alone is a human being.

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We are indifferent to the things of the Spirit and so we do not feel the need for God, but God Himself has taken hold of us by force. The Maharaj

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\*This was an order of women corresponding to the Sadhus, with this difference that these women did not leave home, nor go about.

used to say "A ghost does not leave a man after taking possession of him : how much less shall I do so then ?"

Shreejee Maharaj said "One man-of-war is equal to ten million ships and it is ten million such men-of-war that we want to fill with souls and thus save them. How is it possible to do this ? Then we thought that whosoever should see us should be saved. But we thought again that after all this was possible to a few, and said that whosoever should see our Sadhus should be saved. This again we found impossible to many, and said that whosoever should see our Satsangis should be saved, whosoever should feed them, or give them water, or take their food, or drink their water, should be saved."

As to what should make it impossible for one to leave the Satsang, the Maharaj once said "A man does not fall away from the Satsang if he binds his spirit to all the Sadhus and Satsangis." Then he went on reducing the number of these until at last he said, "If a man binds himself to two good Sadhus and four good Satsangies, he does not fall, otherwise he would in case a difficult situation arose."

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The prince of Gondal called Hathibhai prevented Dosabhai of Bandhia for nearly ten or twelve years from coming to the Maharaj, and then he gave him

permission to do so. He also asked Dosabhai to request the Maharaj as to what he should do for himself, and in reply to this question of Dosabhai, the Maharaj said " Tell Hathibhai to worship God as one might put a thread through a pearl in a flash of lightning. "

x                      x                      x                      x

The Maharaj himself said that he wanted to save all only through grace, and that he would not allow any share to works in the matter of attaining salvation.

x                      x                      x                      x

The Maharaj wants to save an infinite number of souls : that is why he lives and mixes with all. Apart from this the world has no charms for him : rather it is positively repulsive to him so that he would not care to remain in it even for an hour. It is because of his great mercy that he accepts the gifts and services of others, but such things do not constitute his happiness.

x                      x                      x                      x

In the Satsang one gets compound interest, so that if one has fellowship to-day he gets reward the next day, and if he again has fellowship that day, he gets the reward for both these times on the third day. This is how we feed and increase the Satsang.

x                      x                      x                      x

The Maharaj used to say : " I can never have too much of four things : these are Scripture-reading, Conversation about God, Singing of God's praises and

Service. " He used to say this for our sake. He used to repeat " Hare, Hare, " and this also for our sake.

x x x x

The Maharaj said that he would warn or rebuke his disciples through any one, through even those who were unbelievers. Hence when one Sadhu jumped into a well for bath, the owner of the well ( who was not a satsangi ) said, " Sadhus of Swami Narayana do not jump in this way. " Then Jogeshwardas said to that Sadhu " Sadhuram, it is the Maharaj and not this man who is speaking thus. "

x x x x

One gets free from sin only by fellowship with true Sadhus but this presupposes real need and search. In the great famine of Samvat 1869 a rich man used to give to the famine-stricken people a handful of rough kind of wheat flour cooked in water. The poor people, however, would come to beg for it before it was ready, and so the man at the gate would push them so that they would roll down as far as the river. They would again return from there because that was the only place where they got this, little as it was.

In the same way one seeking salvation does not leave the fellowship of the \*Sadhus even though he be insulted. The result of such persistence on his part is that the Sadhus wash away his transgressions with

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\*In all these sayings the Sadhus referred to are those of this Fellowship and their talk is only of God and their Master. Such talk is the Gospel of the Sampradaya.





Worldly greatness brings much misery, therefore one should not allow covetousness or lust or pride to grow. When one's pride grows he himself becomes emaciated, while his ego grows larger. Once upon a time a man began to perform austerities, and immediately there came a cat and he sat in front of him. After some days the cat grew fat, and the ascetic asked him, "How is it that you are growing so stout although you seem to be fasting like myself?" To this the cat replied: "I am your pride; you have been reduced owing to your austerities, but your pride has grown, and that is how I have become so fat." Therefore, we should not allow our pride to grow. We invite misery to ourselves in proportion to the extent we fail in observing the commands given in the Shiksha-Patri by the Maharaj.

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It is a coincidence full of good fortune when a frog comes out from underground and it rains from the heavens simultaneously. The same is the case to-day. The Maharaj manifests himself and we are born as human beings; therefore we should worship God and save ourselves.

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Four things take away the remembrance of God. They are (1) Sufferings which come in the wake of some illness: (2) Awakening of sinful desire such as lust etc.: (3) Attainment of position of authority: (4) Service of the big people of this world. Under the influence of these four, one is apt to lose the remembrance of God, and also the sense of humility and trust.

As against these, the thing that brings this remembrance back are (1) Reading of the Vachanamrit : (2) Presence of these Sadhus : they are meant to perpetuate the same remembrance : (3) and the Temples. All that we do is to keep this memory : therefore one should always keep it alive.

x                      x                      x                      x

A man was once praying. On hearing him another said that he had no faith. Kripananda Swami sweated blood owing to his separation from the Maharaj. I then told him, " Why don't you send word to the Maharaj so that he may keep you with himself ? " To this he replied : " If I were to send word to the Maharaj to that effect I would prove myself to be an unbeliever as that would mean that the Maharaj is not aware of my plight or that he is not omniscient. " I then realized that even our prayers may rise sometimes from our lack of belief.

There are three kinds of Kusang, i. e. evil fellowship. One of these is in the Satsang itself : this is when one believes the Maharaj as equal to other incarnations or the Ekantic Sadhus equal to ordinary sadhus. The second kind is that of the world : this is fellowship with those who do not believe Swami Narayana as God. The third is the inner one i. e. to think evil thoughts and to hear and see things which one ought not to.

We all seem very wise to ourselves and to others, but what is our gain if we fail to secure our salvation which is the one thing most needful and important? Once upon a time a farmer was going with his cart to a neighbouring town to buy things necessary for a marriage in his family, when several of his neighbours came and asked him to bring various things for them. The man on reaching the town bought these things first, and as they took all the space in the cart and the day was advanced, he had to return home. Seeing him, his neighbours came and they took away the things brought for them. When his wife saw the cart empty, she asked him: "Where are the things for which you went to the town?" The man then told her how it was that he could not bring anything for himself. Thus in looking after our bodies, or families or in trying to secure happiness or honour from the world, we miss the thing which is the most important of all, viz., our salvation.

People are always ready to stake their lives for such things as land, money, honour etc.: why should they, then, not do the same for attaining God? Real wisdom lies in attaining one's goal. Banias go to foreign countries where they grow beard, and passing off as Moslems, secure their aim. The believers should do the same and cheat their senses.\* Many people go

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\*This parable is very similar to the one containing the story of the dishonest steward given by Jesus.

to far-off countries to earn their bread incurring much risk thereby, and thieves commit thefts in the midst of much danger. In the same way those who have given themselves to God should keep true to Him even though they may have to pay for it by their very life.

Our souls are delirious with desires. Once a man had delirium, and, when he was asked how he felt, he said, "I am now quite alright, but these dogs are carrying away this mountain." That was how he was 'alright'. We all are in a like position because of our earthly desires.

x                      x                      x                      x

Once upon a time in Loj the Maharaj was going for his dinner at Mulchandbhai's place when he saw in one of the shops in the market a merchant weighing in the scales such things as dung, dust and stones, and crying out "Here is sugar, here is cardamum etc." The Maharaj asked Mulchandbhai who this man was and why he was doing this, when the latter replied: "He is Kaba the mad. He has lost his head since he lost his money and has been behaving in this way ever since." Then the Maharaj said: "To my mind all those who do not worship God are like this man."

x                      x                      x                      x

In former times the Sadhus laboured with the sharpness and speed of arrows leaving a bow, but now nothing is to be done and only the reward is to be taken.

I want to give as much knowledge as I can, for there is not much time left now. I had three severe illnesses, the first of which came as early as A. D. 1839 when I should have passed away, but it seems there is no end to my life. \*Therefore as the Maharaj gave the knowledge the last time by keeping the sadhus with him for eight months, in the same way I want to give knowledge by keeping people for ten months. I shall do this through the reading of the book prepared by Swami Achintyanandjee.

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A man is known by the company he keeps. The Maharaj used to ask "Whose company does this or that Sadhu keep?" On hearing the reply to this question, if he felt that the company was not proper, he would say "He himself is good, but he does not know whose company he should keep."

\*There is a close parallel between what is said here and the story of St. John in regard to his extreme old age. The saying given here was uttered nearly thirty years after the first illness, and the Swami lived ten years more. The Swami says very definitely elsewhere that he was preserved all these years by the Maharaj for the sole purpose of teaching and preaching the true secret about him. This was no other than his being the perfect incarnation or the very God of God, and as such one greater than Rama and Krishna. The book mentioned here was written under his guidance and was meant to be the Gospel according to him. The book was read with due ceremony for several days before a large assembly. This way of reading a book from beginning to end is a common practice with the Hindus.

All these things are new. The Sadhus are new and the Law is new. The Maharaj used to say "We have brought these two, the Sadhus and the Law, with us from Akshara Dham."

x                      x                      x                      x

The Maharaj has said "In times of trouble and difficulty bow down to green grass and I shall help you from there. "

x                      x                      x                      x

If one binds himself to a big Sadhu and if he does some evil or gets into some evil course and is about to leave the Satsang in consequence thereof, the saint, under whose influence he was, takes it upon himself to atone for his sin, or he gives him strength to do so for himself, or in the last resort would keep him in the Satsang by creating some disease in him, but he would not let him leave the Satsang.

x                      x                      x                      x

Although I engage myself in a thousand things, I would cease to live if I were to forget God even for a second. Then somebody asked, "While you are doing so many things, how is it possible for you to have unbroken communion with God?" The Swami replied to this by the question "Do you ever forget your body?" The answer was "No, sir." Then the Swami said "If you can forget your body, I can forget the Maharaj. Just as a fish lives, moves and does everything in water, even so I also live, move and do everything in the presence of the Maharaj.

In former times the seekers sought God but now God seeks the seekers. Just as dust-washers\* look for gold in the dust, God looks for the seekers among the sinners and evil-doers.

x                      x                      x                      x

Once I asked the Maharaj the following question:

Which of these things (1) to meditate on God : (2) to live in the realization that one is a spirit: (3) to serve the sick: (4) to talk to the people about God, is the best ? To this the Maharaj replied, "To talk about God is the best." From that day I have been talking and talking, and there is no rest for me during day or night with the result that many souls become Brahma.†

x                      x                      x                      x

One day the Maharaj said to me: "Form a group of your own Sadhus." I said nothing to this in reply, when looking at me he added "It is good to keep five Sadhus, for thereby you help souls in securing their salvation." The Maharaj then went on adding, "It is good to keep ten Sadhus, twenty, thirty, fifty, hundred and even two hundred Sadhus." I said nothing in reply to all this, but after all I did this very thing.‡

\*These are a class of people who collect the dust in and about the workshops of goldsmiths, and wash it in order to take out what little gold may be found in it.

†As said elsewhere, the belief of this Fellowship is that in the final beatitude, the souls, while keeping their distinction from God and one another, become Brahma. God, in relation to them is Para-Brahma.

‡This was a hint to him from the Master to be a leader of Sadhus.



The believer who has full faith in God and in the greater Sadhus believes himself fully justified, and he does not stand any more in need of any other fellowship. He is like a man who, because he has a billion bushels of wheat or a billion rupees is not afraid that he will die of starvation in a famine: or he is like one who takes with him two thousand armed men and is no more afraid of being robbed.

x                      x                      x                      x

The Maharaj used to say "It is no good mentioning names: in former times some have done spiritual good to the world, but it is all in a measure, and some of them have dug deep wells."

x                      x                      x                      x

The Maharaj used to say "Whosoever is against us is also for us, because he feels that there is one God and therefore it is not proper for this man (Swami Narayana) to take His place. Because of this, he in reality is not against us."

x                      x                      x                      x

Dattatraya saved two souls, Kapil saved one and Rishabhdeva one hundred, and in these days the Sadhus said: "We can save souls which are Daivi,\* but not those which are Asuri." Then the Maharaj replied: "We shall save even the Asuri souls. This was done in the case of Munjo Suru, Manbha, Joban Pagi, Takhat Pagi etc., all of whom were like mountains

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\*Hindus divide souls into these two kinds: to the first of these good is natural, whereas the second kind are evil-minded.

of sin. Such people could be brought into the Satsang only by the Maharaj.

x x x x

In the Scriptures God is spoken of as looking upon all with an equal eye, but this is not true. God belongs to His devotees, and not to those who do not believe in Him.

x x x x

God abides in His Bhaktas but He does this in accordance with their fitness. He abides in a greater measure in those who have more faith and love for Him.

x x x x

A believer asked the Swami "What is that which, when understood properly, would not allow a man, even when he may be mounted on the rod\* of death, to desire that God should deliver him therefrom?" To this the Swami replied "A man would not have such a desire if he knew God to be the author of everything, and that none else but God could do anything; otherwise he would be disturbed in his mind even by a little trouble and lose his patience. In this world even the Maharaj used to have trouble without his giving cause for its rise, for it is the nature of the world to be like that and we should know it as such.

\*In former times in India a man sentenced to capital punishment was made to mount a pointed rod of iron which pierced his body inch by inch until he died.

As a man turns away his face when he sees his mother or sister or daughter in a naked or semi-naked state, even so God does not look at the faults of His devotees.

x                      x                      x                      x

Souls do not leave their nature which is to seek the things of the world and the flesh: in the same way God does not leave His nature which is to save souls.

x                      x                      x                      x

We should praise God but should not believe ourselves to be sinful or fallen, because if we do so we become weak and fall backward.

We have found God, and so there is no reason for us to believe ourselves sinful any more. We should feel that we are saved.

x                      x                      x                      x

We should save ourselves even if we were to lose ten million things, for what will it avail if we gain all these and fail to save ourselves?

x                      x                      x                      x

What can we attain by works? They are like unto a man who made a garden with the water drawn from a well. This is indeed very difficult, for he has to protect his meagre crops from birds, animals, thieves etc. But what is the grace of God like? It is like unto the rain that falls on the earth and makes the crop grow in plenty, so that there is much left even when thieves, animals and birds have taken therefrom. Wells, ponds and rivers grow dry, but not the ocean like which is the grace of God.

Bhai Atmanandjee was a very great Sad-Guru, and he used to follow the commands of the Maharaj most faithfully. He was one hundred and seventeen years of age, and lived in Vagadgam as its water, being light, agreed with him. Once he came to Junagadh where Swami Gunatitananda lived. The latter was a great Sad-Guru, and he used to see the person of the Maharaj all the time. He also used to teach the doctrine of the absolute supremacy of the Maharaj. Both these Sad-Gurus met each other, and when they were left to themselves, Swami Gunatitananda said : " Maharaj Atmanandjee, do you know why you have lived so long ?" To this the latter replied " No, Maharaj, I have no idea why it is so. Please tell me if you know anything about it." Then Swami Gunatitananda said, " You are very dear to Shreejee Maharaj, and you obey him most faithfully. The Maharaj is very dear to you and you are very great. But there is a little lacking in your understanding of the Maharaj, and as the Maharaj knows that he is very dear to you and that you can not live without him, he feels that you should live all this length of time in order that you may know the person of the Maharaj fully, and then go straight to the presence of the Maharaj. This is why he keeps you so long in this body, and so let me tell you the proper truth about the Maharaj, and let it sink into your heart." Accordingly, Swami Gunatitananda told him the truth, and Bhai Atmanandjee knew as he should have known. He then said to the Swami, " Gurujee, why did you not tell me this before ?" The latter replied " I have done so to-day because of the command of the Maharaj." Then Bhai Atmanandjee came back to Vagadgam, and after a few days leaving his body went to Akshar-dham.\*

\*This story throws a good deal of light on the development of doctrine that took place in this body under the fostering care of Swami Gunatitananda.

Once Ramjee Sheth of Memka on the fourth day of the dark half of the month of Shravan in the year 1945 (Samvat) corresponding to A. D. 1889 said to himself in the afternoon "I have now nothing to do with the world, and shall carry on no worldly activity anymore. I shall henceforth devote myself solely to God, and I shall give myself constantly to the remembrance of the Maharaj, just as I saw him four times in the flesh. While he was thinking in this way, Shreejee Maharaj came and stood before him at a distance of about five feet. The Maharaj then had upon his body only a loin-cloth and was bare-bodied except for this. He looked extremely handsome and of about twenty five years of age. Ramjee Sheth knew him by the face at once and said: "The Maharaj has come in person." He saw the Maharaj first in full and then in detail, the two feet with their red-nailed toes, the two white ankles and the two thick calves, the round stomach with its three folds, and the two round and long arms and the thick neck: he saw all this in detail, and then Ramjee Sheth's look was fixed on the face of the Maharaj, and he could no more wink nor look at any other part of the body, nor could he speak, nor did he have any sense of his own body. The Maharaj all this while was just moving a little to and fro, and looked steadily at Ramjee. The latter looked at the Maharaj steadily and then he thought that he should get up and fall at the feet of the Maharaj, and as he stood up to do this the Maharaj disappeared. Ramjee Sheth was extremely pained at this and began to shed copious tears, but it was in vain. Ramjee Sheth worshipped the Maharaj from the first as the Supreme, but since the day the Maharaj manifested himself in this way, he gave to Ramjee the following four gifts :

( 1 ) The first is that he sees the Maharaj all the time in his self: ( 2 ) the second is that not a breath passes

without his taking the name of Swami Narayana, ( 3 ) he can no more look at any woman and has lost all sense of woman's age, colour and dress and, ( 4 ) he has lost sexual appetite altogether and has no sexual desire even in dreams. His nature has been remodelled in this four-fold manner after this vision. He did not want to write this thing about himself, but has done so only to manifest the wonderful glory of Shreejee Maharaj, the Supreme Being and Person. These things can not be known without being told, and I request all readers and hearers of this to have mercy on me. This is how the Maharaj manifested himself in a supernatural manner.\*

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\*The last two are the only stories in this chapter which are not taken from Swami Gunatitananda's talks. This last one here is from a collection of 208 stories dictated by Ramjee Sheth to his son in the year A. D. 1899, i. e. about a decade after he had the vision mentioned herein. This collection was first published by his grandson in the year 1925 A. D.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Personal Character

We may now well look a little more closely at the person whose life and work have been dealt with in the foregoing chapters. We have had already glimpses of his character and some impression of his personality as a whole. All this would naturally make us desirous to know more of him. What kind of a man was he, and what were his virtues and vices if any? These things are of supreme interest to us in the life of any human being, and much more in the case of those whom we call great.

Some account has been given already of some of his characteristic attainments at the time he assumed the leadership of the Satsang. It would be a mistake to think, however, that this was something negative. On the other hand it was an integral part of something most positive, and this was nothing less than the realization of the Spirit as the supreme reality. So jealous was he of the all important place of this in his life that he was even afraid to take upon himself the responsibilities of leadership of the Fellowship, lest it might deflect him ever so little from his spiritual path. He looked upon it as a possible temptation, and it was only when he was assured by Swami Ramana that it would not be so in his case that he became the Acharya. He then lived this kind of life for nearly thirty years, and we might well ask whether any worldliness crept in his soul. All sorts of tempta-

tions were thrown in his way; in fact he was surrounded by them. The question may well be asked: Did these affect him in any way ?

We have seen how for more than a decade after his installation as the Acharya, he imposed the strictest possible discipline upon the Sadhus. He continued to do this all his life though with increasing modification in the rigour of the first days. He could never have done this had there been nothing corresponding to it in his life, and we know from positive testimony that it was there. To such an extent was he afraid of the world, to use the term made familiar by the medieval mystics of the Christian Church, that once or twice in the course of his career, he seriously thought of leaving the body of which he was the head in order to retire to that solitary life which was his before he came to this Fellowship. It was, however, the feeling that by such a step on his part much of the good work he had accomplished would be undone and that people would suffer in their religious life which kept him from doing this. We make a room for a statement made by himself as regards his own predilections and the way he lived in the world:

In my childhood and early boyhood I was fond of going to temples for worship and hearing scriptural stories, loved the company of good Sadhus and other religious persons, and liked to go to places of pilgrimage. Later on when I left home I did not like to have even clothes, and was fond of living in forests. I had no fear whatsoever even though I saw big serpents, lions, tigers and wild elephants.



None of these animals made me fear for my life in the least, and even in the wildest of forests I used to live altogether fearlessly. Going in this way from one place of pilgrimage to another, I came in course of time to Swami Ramananda, and when he left the world I began to have some anxiety and fear on account of the Satsang. In my heart of hearts, however, I feel constantly like one lying on his death-bed. Just as in the case of such a person there is no selfish aim of any kind to serve, nor has he any love for the world left in him, so do I feel in regard to myself as well as others. As for the world and all its things, I feel them all to be subject to destruction, and as such of no consequence. I do not make any difference between them as worthy and unworthy just as one makes no difference between one hair and another. If I say sometimes that some things are good, e. g. food or clothes or ornaments, it is only for the sake of pleasing the believers who offer such things. Whatsoever I do in this way is for their sake and not for my own pleasure. Those who are single-minded devotees of God engage their mind only in the contemplation of God, their tongue in singing His praises, their hands in His service and ears in hearing His praises. All my actions are of this kind, and apart from that I am detached from all things. I always have the feeling that I am a spirit and as such different from my body, and I am continually on the watch lest anything material should mix itself with my spirit.

In another statement he shows the difference between himself and even the best disciples, and it is as follows:

Once while the meeting was held, the Sadhus and others sang some devotional songs to the accompaniment of musical instruments. After this song-service was over, the Maharaj said the following :

On hearing this song there came over my spirit the mood of contemplation wherein I felt that deep love for God is a very great thing, and I remembered believers like Swami Gopalananda\* who have deep faith. I saw their hearts, their souls, and their love for God. Then I examined my own spirit, and I found that the love for God which I have is not like the love which they have, for when they are placed in unfavourable circumstances, although they are great devotees, their mind is affected, which shows that the foundation of their love is not very strong, and if there be too much of temptation their love may get quite unsettled. But it is not so with me, for even if I were placed in the most unfavourable circumstances, my heart would remain constant to God. True love for God is his who loves nothing but God, and the secret of all the Scriptures is that God is the Supreme Reality and the Giver of Supreme Bliss, and all other things are altogether worthless and are unreal in comparison with Him. Just as a piece of cloth dyed in purple colour looks very beautiful, but it looks equally ugly when it gets wet and is then dried, and is no more like even an ordinary piece of white cloth, so does he who has love for the things of the world lose his balance entirely as soon as he gets evil fellowship. Hence he who is a devotee of God must leave off entirely all his worldly desires and fleshly lusts, and he ought not to love anything that may prove a stumbling-block to his love for God.

Consistently with this he would not allow anything but God or things relating to His work to occupy his mind in even a cursory manner. He brought every thought and feeling and image in his mind under captivity to this supreme object of his mind

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\*This was the man who was appointed by Swami Naryana as the head of the entire body after him.      full

which was nothing less than unbroken and perfect communion with God. In this connection we shall give one of his statements although a part of it has been repeated elsewhere in the book:

I went to Ahmedabad for the installation ceremony of Nara Narayana in the temple there and thousands of people had gathered together there. After finishing the ceremony and doing all the needful, we left the place and stayed for the night at Jetalpur. While there I felt that I must wipe out from my mind the memory of all that large concourse of men etc., which was forcing itself on my mind, and this process was so painful that I became ill. Leaving this place we passed the night elsewhere and the next night in a wood, and all the while I was trying to forget what I had seen. While I was in this wood this process became so powerful that I was even unconscious of my body and I ceased to have any memory of what I had seen. I then became like what I was before I went to Ahmedabad. When all these earthly images were removed from my mind I kept on looking inward, and there I saw many wonders of the heavenly spheres and things of beauty and enjoyment such as angels have, but my heart being set on God alone did not rest there. Just as the things of this world seemed to me to be of no consequence whatsoever, so everything belonging to all these angelic and heavenly worlds was as nothing to me. Upon this the angels began to praise me saying: "You are a true devotee of God because your heart desires nothing but God." Hearing this I was much encouraged and told my mind: "I know thy nature. If you think of anything except God I shall crush you to atoms." And I said the same to my understanding and to my heart and to my soul. Then I ceased to have any memory of these angelic worlds as of the other, and when all these images vanished, the illness which was brought on by them vanished

top. It is in this way that the saints of God should set their heart on God alone.

These passages supply the key to much of the character of Swami Narayana. In them we come across what was deepest in his life and was the cause of his marvellous success. His Bhakti and Yoga were at the back of his Vairagya, and this last was only a negative aspect of the same. Of these two, while Yoga predominated in the earlier part of his life, Bhakti began to have a larger place as time went. There was a corresponding change in his relations with men.

He was no longer the fierce task-master that he once was, and in regard to whose severe discipline of the Sadhus even Swami Muktananda entertained a fear lest it might prove a stumbling-block to some of them and they might leave the Satsang. Although many were attracted to him from the first because of his great spiritual powers, some did leave owing to this rigour. As Bhakti grew, however, there was less emphasis on renunciation and asceticism. It is interesting to observe that with the growth of Bhakti, even the doctrine and the practice of Ahimsa was modified to some extent as Swami Narayana himself says in one of his discourses. According to the strictest principle of Ahimsa even to pluck a blade of grass is wrong, and Swami Narayana himself had observed such Ahimsa in his earlier days.

He would not then pluck even a leaf, and as mentioned before there arose a serious fracas between two factions of sadhus amongst whom he lived for

the time being, because of his tender regard for vegetable life. But one has to do this and much more when one builds temples etc., and Swami Narayana did this deliberately being fully aware of the modification of the principle of Ahimsa that it involved. He built temples etc. in order to foster the love of God in men.

An integral part of this Bhakti is love for men, and Swami Narayana had this in the fullest measure possible. He was filled with what is called the passion for souls. All his work is an eloquent testimony to this, and this love pervades the entire range of the Literature of the movement. To save as many souls as possible may be said to be his one passion and everything that he did was to this end. There are some very characteristic statements of his in this connection, and for one or two of them we must make room here:

Once the Maharaj was in Gadhada in his room called Akshar Ordi and Muljee Sheth was with him. The Maharaj said "Muljee, how far can you count?" To this he replied: "Maharaj, our arithmetic knows to count as far as eighteen figures." The Master said "We want to save this time as many souls as that. This is our aim. We shall bring souls desiring salvation from all quarters, and make them take birth\* in the Satsang and save them."

\*This does not mean that a person to be saved must be born in the Satsang. This refers to souls and spirits all over the universe including even higher worlds, for the Hindu belief is that final salvation is possible to human beings alone.

Again when some Sadhus returned after a successful tour, he asked them how much the Satsang had increased, and on being told that it had a great deal, he said to them: " This can not be called much. I should call it something when there are a hundred thousand followers for every Sadhu, " and he added, " I have brought ten million ships and shall take them back all filled with saved souls ".

It was this great love for souls which made him and his followers go out in search of the wildest elements of society, of unruly and criminal tribes, and even amongst them, for the worst of sinners and their success was equally great. One of these tribes was that of the Kathis who have been thus described by an Englishman called Colonal Walker in 1808:

The Kathis are distinguished only for rapacious habits and robbery. To this mode of life they attach neither disgrace nor reproach. On the contrary they boast of their devastations and rapine, and, without seeking to cloak the matter, call themselves plainly thieves. Without property, and frequently without a place of fixed residence, the Kathis despise and brave the resentment of states who are much more powerful than themselves. They pursue their licentious habits without restraint. The disorder and misery that arise from this state of perpetual hostility is easily traced throughout this country.

This was not the only tribe of this kind: there were others which were even worse and more depraved though not so bold and martial as the Kathis. These were Kolis, Bhils etc., and Swami Narayana's love for humanity or rather passion for souls made

him work for the salvation of all these equally with the rest. His success among people of this kind has been thus described by an Englishman of those days:

But the genius of Sahajananda Swami was not confined simply to the rigid establishment of Hindu worship *in virginal integrity*, it was also directed against the *irregularities of the age*, and to the recovery of thousands of those unfortunate men to be found throughout Gujrat whose means of subsistence hitherto were equally lawless and precarious. Of his success in this latter respect there is abundant testimony from the vast hordes who have been reclaimed to honest and industrious pursuits, while the *present undisturbed state of the country compared with the conditions previously* will speak for themselves. (The italics are of the Englishman.)

This Love for Humanity in Swami Narayana found its concentrated expression in his love for the poor. These were especially dear to him. There are innumerable stories told in connection with this aspect of his life. Of these poor, the Sadhus who had left their all and dedicated themselves to the service of God, were closest to his heart. Their joys were his joys, and their sufferings were his too. Perhaps the only time his face is said to have been flushed with anger was when he saw the marks of stripes on the persons of some of these Sadhus, who were beaten severely by some ascetics belonging to some other order. On seeing these marks he dashed his hands on the ground, and said, "Oh, the sinners have beaten so unmercifully our Sadhus." Even then, however, he did not utter any word of cursing.

This love for the poor found expression in a number of ways. It led to much social service among them too. One of the worst of famines that ever visited this part of the country was in the year 1813-14, when due to the total failure of rains, there was very little grain of any kind available in Kathiawad, and people died by the thousand. Many were the philanthropies of those days which are still sung by the bards, but perhaps none worked so systematically and with such foresight as was done by Swami Narayana for the relief of his followers. It is said that he had foretold the coming of this famine, and had sent letters to his followers asking them to sell their cattle and all their possessions including houses, jewelry, etc, and to store up grain with the money realized therefrom. While some followed this advice, others did not, and it was for the relief of these that he took measures. In order that the Sadhus may not be a burden to the laymen, he sent them away to Gujrat where the conditions were not so bad. He himself adopted\* an ascetic life as a sign of sorrow, and went from place to place in secret† to see the condition of his followers. He sent for grain from Gujrat and distributed it in various places. A number of laymen even were sent to Gujrat. Besides he did not make

\*This was something like going into sackcloth and ashes. He allowed his hair and nails to grow, and made some change in the mode of his life.

†He did this as there was every possibility of his being kidnapped and held for ransom at that time.



any distinction between his followers and others in the matter of distribution of grain. In all these things he showed remarkable insight in matters of practical life. He is also credited with having performed many miracles during this period.

It was Swami Narayana's firm belief that deep down in every heart, especially that of the poor, the down-trodden and the little ones, there is the abode of God, and to do any harm to such, even by a word or a gesture, is to wound God within. Because of this he never lost his temper and treated everyone he came across with uniform love, good-will and courtsey. He looked upon even those who were inimical to him and his cause as his friends, and he was ever ready to do good to them in return for evil. There are several stories in their literature which describe this forgiveness and charity of his to those who considered themselves his enemies. We shall make room here for one or two stories wherein is a manifestation of his tenderness towards children.

Once upon a time while the meeting was going on, a snake was found and there was a great deal of confusion. While they were taking hold of the snake, a boy, who wanted to see what was going on, came again and again to the front. As this put him in danger, Swami Narayana gave him a slap and asked him to go away. After the excitement was over, Swami Narayana felt sorry for this and said, "If my hand is smarting with pain still, how much more pain must the boy have felt?" He then sent for him and gave him presents.

The following shows his eagerness to satisfy the desire of little ones:

Once Shrijee Maharaj while in Gadhada was being shaved by a barber. This man was asked by a boy to give him the hair of the Maharaj which he promised to do, and so the boy sat there while the Maharaj was being shaved. As soon as the barber finished his work he went away without fulfilling his promise, whereupon the boy began to cry. On hearing this the Maharaj asked him what he wanted, and when the boy told him what the matter was he said, "Now do not cry, come and cut off my tuft of hair." The boy said "No, sir, your tuft can not be cut."\* Then the Maharaj took a pair of scissors, cut off the tuft himself, gave it to the boy, and thus pleased him. This was how he had mercy on him.

In the following story we have a fine instance of Swami Narayana's sense of fairness and readiness to make amends not only for his own fault as in the story preceding the last, but even for that of his disciples. It also shows his great humility. This is how it stands:

Once in Gadhada Zinabhai's son Hathibhai seeing a Jain monk seated in the monastery in the bazaar spat, and as a part of the spittle fell on the monk, he complained to his disciples of the conduct of this follower of Swami Narayana. Upon this these men who were some of the chief merchants in the place closed their shops. Swami Narayana on hearing this went in person to the place of the monks, and falling at their feet begged their forgiveness, whereupon the strike came to an end.

\*The tuft is not usually cut by the Hindus of the orthodox school, and hence the hesitation of the boy.

This love extended even to the animal world. Once while Swami Narayana was in Sarangpur there was continuous rain for three days, owing to which some of the houses in the place began to collapse. One of these had about a dozen cattle in it, and they all were pressed under a beam. The owner of the house came while the meeting was going on and made a request for help. Upon this Swami Narayana asked those present to go and help, but as none got up readily he himself ran and held the beam until the cattle were removed.

This love and good-will, boundless as they were, never degenerated themselves in a mere sentiment or mush of amiability. He could be stirred to his depths and feel indignant too. His love towards his disciples, tender as it was, had a sort of rigour in it which did not easily brook any wilful disobedience on the part of any one. It was considered an essential part of discipleship for the followers to obey his commands as well as to love him; obedience was considered by him a true sign of love and loyalty. It is true he was not easily displeased with any one, and in this he contrasted himself with his predecessor Ramananda Swami who, "like Rama,\* was easily displeased with any one of his disciples if they committed any fault." But if he found after much watching something seriously wrong with someone, wrong which was deliberately persisted in,

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\*The most notable example of this is his renunciation of his wife Sita for what was no fault of hers. In this respect Krishna was more forbearing.

he then felt a dislike for such a person. However, the people who displeased him the most were those who were the enemies of God and of true religion, and with such he could not even force himself to talk. The rich and the big people of the world found him to be a force at least as great as theirs

It must not be, however, supposed that Swami Narayana was moved by a sense of false independence. In spite of the fact that he received so much worship and obedience from such large numbers of people, he was a most humble man. This was an integral part of his life as a Sadhu. He did not hesitate to go even to the poorest of his disciples.

Swami Narayana could not have been all that has been described above without having a singular purity of character. This has been, besides, a noted characteristic of his followers, and in this matter they differ widely from many of the followers of other Vaishnava sects. This Sampradaya in this respect is radically different from others. How he tried to maintain the sexual purity of his followers, and what drastic measures he took for this purpose has been already mentioned. It has also been said how he himself had followed all these rules and much stricter too in his earlier days. It is true he could not follow these later on, especially in view of his position in the movement where he had to deal with all sorts of people including both men and women. But still he imposed upon himself very wholesome restrictions.

One very important characteristic of Swami Narayana was his energy which was nothing short of tremendous. From the very start of his career, he was fired with a zeal for work which nothing could damp. It rather grew on the opposition and persecution it met with, and every stumbling-block was an additional urge for it to carry forward the message of salvation which it was his mission to give. Speed, urgency, energy, these seem to be writ large on his ministry extending over a generation. One gets here the same impression that one has of the work of Jesus Christ while reading the Gospel of St. Mark, with this difference, however, that while there the ministry is of such a short duration, it is here twenty times as long. Swami Narayana's life is crowded thick with events such as journeys to and fro all over the province on foot and horse, preaching to multitudes of people and teaching big and small groups of Sadhus and laymen, performing Sacrifices on a large scale and celebrating the Hindu festivals year by year in a fitting manner, holding Conventions, building big and small mandirs, creating literature and doing many other things. Without exaggeration it might be said that he was not only the most active of all the religious teachers of New India, but one of the most dynamic that India has known in its long history. In his preaching tours he visited hundreds of towns and villages, and many of these, not once or twice, but scores of times. The present writer has a very vivid and pleasant memory of a woman, whom he met on a train while she was returning

from one of the Conventions, telling him that she belonged to a village which the Maharaj had visited twenty-four times.

With all this activity, he is never too busy for personal relations with his disciples. These are as deep and tender and manifold as the other is immense and intense. Indeed it would seem that these are the two poles round which his life revolves. Rather all this great activity is directed to the end of creating and deepening character and the right kind of personal relations between himself and his followers, and also amongst themselves. It is these that form the idylls of this Fellowship, and the number of these is legion.

There is in him also a great and deep love for Nature. If anything, he is more at home in the bosom of this primeval mother of humanity than in the midst of society, and it is a matter of regret to him, sometimes, in spite of his leading such a remarkably useful life, that he cannot live in greater and almost exclusive fellowship with Nature. Groves, rivers, hills, mountains etc, gave him the purest of joy and inspiration, and he was keenly sensitive to all the beauties of Nature. Even the roar of wild animals such as panthers and lions is an integral part of such Nature to him, and it evoked in him only a note of appreciation.

Swami Narayana was in addition to all this a wise man of affairs. He was not a sentimentalist, nor a doctrinaire, nor an altogether other-worldly ascetic. He was a most practical and active mystic in the best

sense of the term. He had deep insight into human character and things. Had it not been for this, he would never have been able to lead such a big religious movement, nor lay its foundation so deep. Traces of this great wisdom of his are found at every step in the course of the movement. The way he trained the Sadhus, built such big mandirs, divided the country in different dioceses, organized the relations between the Sadhus and laymen etc, in all this he reveals himself as a man of profound wisdom and insight.

✱ We shall make room for one more story to show what spirit moved Swami Narayana and his movement:

One of the outstanding disciples of Swami Narayana was a man called Zinabhai who was a big landlord. While returning home from some place on his way he passed by a village called Loj. Here he made inquiries for a man called Kamalshi who belonged to the weaver caste and was a fellow-believer. He was told that Kamalshi was seriously ill and very miserable as he was not properly attended to by his people. Upon this Zinabhai called the son and the daughter-in-law of Kamalshi and requested them to take proper care of him, but on receiving an unsatisfactory reply, he asked them whether he could take him to his house. To this the son assented at once, and so Zinabhai sent for labourers to carry him on his bedstead. He was able to procure only three, and so holding the fourth leg of the bedstead himself, he came out of the house with his horse following behind. As soon as the people outside saw this, knowing his high position, they did not allow him to proceed further in this way, and enough help was found to carry Kamalshi. On reaching home, Zinabhai asked his sister where they should keep him, whereupon she in anger said

that he might be kept in the gate-room. Rather than put him there, Zinabhai kept him in his own room, and looked after him himself in every way. He rendered him every kind of service including even the most menial. When the Maharaj heard this, he went to Panchala and embraced Zinabhai several times. Later on when Zinabhai fell seriously ill, the Maharaj went to him, and while the Maharaj was there Zinabhai passed away. When his body was being taken to the crematorium, the Maharaj helped in carrying the bier up to the gate. Later on when Muktananda Swami asked the Maharaj why he did this, a thing which he had not done even in the case of his own nephew when he passed away, the Maharaj replied "When Kamalshi was ill, Zinabhai gave his shoulder in carrying him, and in consequence I helped in carrying Zinabhai twice the distance he walked."

One more characteristic of Swami Narayana we must mention here, and that is his great humour. This came from the depths and fullness of life itself, and we find it pervading the life and work of this great Teacher and also the entire movement. In spite of the very rigorous asceticism of his life and that of his followers, he gives the impression of one who was in the midst of a perpetual marriage-party as a bride-groom, so full is he of cheerfulness and joy and laughter, and he dispenses these and much more wherever he goes. He and his disciples know well what it is to lack and to abound, but in the midst of it all they sing and play and wrestle and crack jokes, thereby giving testimony to the fact that they had drunk of the fulness of life and found a freedom that only those who are of God can realize.



In these and many other traits Swami Narayana presents a character that was, indeed, as full and rich as it could be, and that has thus left an example not only for his disciples but for all those who love excellence of whatever kind in human beings in order that they may make it their own.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Teaching of Swami Narayana

Within the short compass of a chapter, it is not easy to give a complete account of the teaching of Swami Narayana in all its profundity or many-sidedness, and all that we propose to do here is to draw a rough outline thereof. The doctrine that he taught is a full-orbed one with every part and particle thereof glowing with a deep and vital personal experience, and consequently to describe it in terms of Philosophy and Theology is to do injustice to it. None the less it is Swami Narayana's true greatness that he does not discard the aid of Philosophy as such, and he is greater still when he acknowledges his exclusive debt in this matter to Shri Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava Teacher and Theologian. It is the Vishistadwaita—the qualified monism—of the latter that Swami Narayana accepts as his own, and that was adopted in all probability before him by his teacher Swami Ramananda. Swami Narayana says this again and again in his Vachanamrit, his Shiksha Patri, Epistles etc, and he traces his spiritual succession to the great Vaishnava Teacher. This detracts in no way from the greatness of Swami Narayana as is alleged sometimes by some of the other sects of Vaishnavism. It only means, however, that Philosophy, though not overlooked, does play a subsidiary part in the life of the movement. It is true Swami Narayana is not an Acharya in the sense of one who gives an exegetical exposition

of the Scriptures and expounds a Philosophy based thereupon as was done by Shankara, Ramanuja, Maddhwa, Vallabha etc, but this very limitation, if it be one, taken along with his other powers shows him to all the greater advantage because it saved his movement from having a definitely intellectual cast which would have debarred it to a certain extent from reaching those strata of society which it did. In this as in many other things, Swami Narayana's work reminds one of the Christian Church in its earlier and even the medieval period when the Catholic Church took Aristotle's philosophy as its own. What Swami Narayana did in this respect, however, was more consistent than what was done by the Catholic Church, for the latter had to unite two different streams of thought and life, viz., Hebrew Prophecy and Greek Philosophy, whereas Ramanuja as a predecessor was both a Prophet and Philosopher in one, and he drew his inspiration for both from the Vedas.

The core of the doctrine of this Sampradaya is the belief in the living Personal God, who is known as the Purushottama, the Supreme Person. He is the Creator, Preserver and Sustainer of the Universe: He is the one who gives the reward for good as well as evil deeds, and He is also the Saviour of those who trust themselves to His care. He incarnates Himself out of His infinite mercy again and again in history, and faith in the Incarnate One brings grace and salvation. It is thus that Swami Narayana describes Him in one of his Vachanamrits:

All my mind is turned inwards to the spiritual sky pervading the heart, and there I see a great light in the midst of which there is God. He is extremely radiant, and though His colour is dark because of this great light, He does not look dark but looks extremely white. He has two arms and two legs, and not four or eight or a thousand arms, and He is extremely beautiful and attractive. He is very gentle, has the form of a human being, and is like a child. He seems to stand sometimes in the light, and at other times to sit and again to move about. He is surrounded on all sides by groups of Saved Ones, and the look of all these has been fixed on Him. I see God in this form at this very moment, and I used to see Him before I had joined the Satsang. Nay, I used to see Him while I was in my mother's womb, and did so even before I was conceived. It is while in His presence that I am now speaking to you here, and I see that you all are sitting there. But I do not see this town Gadhada nor this verandah.

All this is not mere Philosophy or Theology but profound moral and spiritual teaching as is evident from what follows the words quoted above:

When any one knows the Person of God in this way, he will not be attached to and bound by any pleasures of the senses. You also see Him but you do not know Him properly, and when you will understand this thing truly, it will not be difficult for you to conquer the senses, or such sins as lust, anger etc. They all will be conquered easily. Now this pure light is Spirit or Brahma or Akshardhama, and the Person of God who is in that light is the Essence of the Spirit, or Para-Brahma or Purshottama. It is this God who incarnates Himself as Rama, Krishna, etc., from time to time in order to save souls. Although God in these forms looks like a human being, He is not one of Mankind but is

the Lord of Akshardhama. Shree Krishna has said in the Bhagwad-Gita : " There shines neither sun, nor moon, nor fire, and going where one never returns : that is my supreme abode. " Therefore although Sri Krishna looked like a human being, He is the supreme God who transcends all. When God incarnates Himself in any human form, whosoever meditates on this sees God—the same who is radiantly shining in the Akshardhama—and he conquers the world and attains the supreme abode. Hence when God takes upon Himself a human form, He is perfect, and whatsoever place he may be in becomes also divine, and His clothes, vehicles and whatever things he makes use of together with those who minister unto Him, they all become divine. Those who know God in this way have in them no love left for the objects of this world as in my case and they become free.

In the following words which come immediately after we have the philosophy of incarnation:

It is this Supreme Transcendent God who is the cause of all incarnations : these manifest themselves from Him and again merge themselves in Him, and when God after manifesting Himself returns, the body which He has taken is sometimes left behind as e. g. the body of Shri Krishna, which was taken by Rukhmani in her lap and with which she burnt herself to death, and sometimes the entire body with its bones, flesh, etc., becomes spiritual and disappears. Also while manifesting, God sometimes is born of a woman and at other times in some other way. Thus His birth as well as death are supernatural, and when you understand this properly you will find the path to your salvation easy. But without this faith, however much you may renounce or practise fasting etc, it is not possible to attain salvation. If one says that although he has faith he does not find himself perfectly happy and at peace with himself, the answer to him is that it is God's will. In reality such people

are justified and have reached the goal which is salvation. If one has faith and he has still some defect left in him, it does not matter. The greatest defect is the lack of this faith. Therefore while there is time, one should do everything to understand this secret. This is wonderful knowledge and even in the heavens they talk of this only. It is not possible to know this truth from the Scriptures. These may contain the knowledge of it, but it is only when the true Teacher manifests himself one can know it from him, but never by oneself with the help of his own intelligence even from the Scriptures.

In the following words we have a description of the character of the man who has known this secret:

The man who has known the Person of God in this way will not be proud in the least even if he can look into the past, present and future : neither would he bless nor curse and sometimes he may do this: he would be without fear altogether and sometimes he may fear even, but he would not feel joy or sorrow on account of these things. Whosoever has such deep faith in God will never do anything evil, but if he were to do something improper owing to the force of circumstances, such a man does not fall from the path of salvation. Owing to all this, there is no path so free from obstacles as that of firm faith in God. Those who have a proper understanding of this have very high aims. Just see, I have nothing to gain from the Param-hamsas or Satsangis, nevertheless I talk to them, rebuke some and at times even drive away some. I do all this because I feel that if any person understands this secret, he will reap much good from it. Therefore keep what I have told you now firm in your mind.

Then follow these words:

And know also this that the Person in that light is this very Maharaj, and if you cannot feel that, know at

least this for certain that the Person in that light which is Akshardhama itself is seen by me. Even if you know this much there will be love and communion between me and you, and thereby you will attain final beatitude.

Then follow these words :

Keep this thing ever-new and do not let it be forgotten out of indifference. Keep it as new to-morrow as it is to-day, and do the same as long as you remain in this body. Also whenever you talk of God do bring an element of this truth in it. This is my command. This truth is so life-giving that so long as you remain in flesh you should talk of it every day, and you have to do the same when you leave off this body and are clothed with Bhagvati-tanu ( the divine body ). What I have told you now is the core of Scriptures, and my experience says the same thing. I say this to you having seen it with my own eyes. I swear by all the Paramhamsas that it is so.

Then follows the comment of the editors:

It was in this way that Shrije Maharaj talked of his own invisible Divinity, hearing which all the Sadhus and the Haribhaktas believed that the Person in the light of whom the Maharaj talked was no other than the visible Maharaj himself.

We have here in this Vachanamrit the very essence of Swami Narayana's teaching as well as the development that has taken place in it in the belief of his followers in regard to their Master. It may be incidentally said here that the majority of the Vachanamrits are not so personal as this. In the present one, however, the Teaching and the Teacher have become one, and that in reality is the secret of the Sampradaya.

As regards the Teaching, it is pure Theism, and the God of its belief is supremely personal. He has a Form or Body which, of course, is not material but altogether spiritual and divine. It is doubtful if the word Body is appropriate in this connection as He is one and an indivisible whole. While in human beings, we have soul, mind and body, which can be differentiated from one another, it is not the same in the case of God. It is this God Who incarnates Himself from time to time according to the needs of the age out of the infinite love of His heart for the salvation of human beings and for the establishment of righteousness upon earth as the Gita says. He alone is the object of worship whether in Himself or in these incarnations of His, the greatest among these being Sri Krishna according to the express teaching of Swami Narayana. As has been said elsewhere in the present work, many followers of Swami Narayana look upon their Master as one greater than Sri Krishna. It is their belief that God has manifested himself in him as never before, and that the highest beatitude, not possible before, is vouchsafed to those who believe in Him.

As for the gods and goddesses and the teachers of other sects, they may be respected and a sort of homage may be paid to them, but this in no sense as to amount to such worship as is to be given to God. Under no circumstances they should be prayed to or their aid invoked. The faith of this Sampradaya is a militant one, and it does not brook any mixed loyalty.



on the part of its followers. Such single-minded devotion to God is called Ekantic Bhakti, and it is this which has been enjoined by Swami Narayana.

We might well ask what attitude Swami Narayana had towards such non-Vedic and alien but theistic faiths as Islam and Christianity. Of the latter he seems to have known nothing whatsoever, and although there is mention several times in the literature of the Sampradaya of his having seen Englishmen, and we have an independent account from the pen of Bishop Heber who saw him, there is not a single word to be found in regard to the religion of these foreigners, whom as a class of people and whose government and reforms that came along with them, Swami Narayana commends very highly. As for Islam he seems to have known a little thereof and that too incidentally. He had many Moslem Disciples, but he does not seem to have given any time to the study of Islam. We do not find, however, in all the literature of the Sampradaya a single word in disparagement of this faith. Rather his attitude towards it is one of sympathetic tolerance.

On the other hand we come again and again upon instances where his dire wrath is aroused at the monistic teaching of Shankara and his followers, and also at the lack of belief in the existence of God among the Jains. In his eyes both these schools of thought, in spite of the fact that one of them is Vedic and the other Aryan, are anathema, and he warns his disciples to beware of them. It must be said, however, that one

rarely comes across any attack on the founders of these schools of thought. Besides, Swami Narayana was not above learning whatever was good among both the Vedantins and the Jains, although he had no sympathy for their philosophical beliefs, and he adopted quite a number of practices from the latter, especially in regard to the doctrine and practice of non-violence i. e. Ahimsa, and also the discipline of the Sadhus.

In this and many other ways, the Ekantic Bhakti i. e. the single-minded devotion to one God is hedged round very carefully from all admixture of monism, polytheism and atheism. It is also protected against eroticism which has always been a great danger to Bhakti in India. This has been the case especially with the Vaishnava Sampradaya of Vallabhacharya which has been prevalent in Gujrat for some centuries. The safeguards against eroticism were found in what are known as Atma-Nistha and Vairagya, both of which are considered essential for salvation along with Bhakti. Of these the first i. e. Atma-Nistha which may be roughly translated as "faith in one's being essentially a spirit" emphasizes the fact that the individual is a pure spirit and not a body as is usually imagined. According to Swami Narayana a devotee or believer is expected to be free from any identification with the body whatsoever, although this last may be and ought to be used as a very important instrument for salvation. As God Himself is a spirit, we too are spirits, and we should always believe ourselves to be such, and pray God and act as such.

While this Atma-Nistha is a positive thing, the Vairagya which is to accompany it is the corresponding negative virtue, and as such it needs must be practised in full. Vairagya means complete detachment from the world and all that it stands for. Atma-Nistha leads to freedom from the flesh and Vairagya from the world. Both these must be complete, and Swami Narayana took particular care to see that the virtue of chastity ranked very high and that it was practised as fully as possible in thought, word and deed, especially among the Sadhus. In this he went further than many of the great Teachers of the world, and even to-day, at the end of a century since he passed away, this virtue is still one of the outstanding features of his followers. The Atma-Nistha enjoined by him, inasmuch as it withdraws one's attention from the flesh and fixes it on the spirit, has been a great bulwark against the entrance of eroticism, and no room is thus left for the prevalence of any idea of sex in connection with God the Supreme Spirit or his Saints. These too are spirits as God is, with this difference, however, that they are dependant on God.

Not only is the Ekantic Bhakti of this Sampradaya free from such admixture but it is to be at the same time positively ethical and holy. In order to achieve this end, it is loaded with the laws of Righteousness called Sad-Dharma. This last is considered a thing of as much importance as the Bhakti itself. All these four, Bhakti, Atma-Nistha, Vairagya and Sad-Dharma are equally binding upon all those who would tread the

path of salvation, and thus the Gospel that Swami Narayana preached and practised was a full-orbed one. To the word Dharma he has prefixed the adjective Sad, which means "good" deliberately, for all that is generally known by the term "Dharma" may not necessarily be true or good. The word Dharma has a very wide connotation, and it means laws of moral conduct regulating one's social relations enjoined by the Scriptures and especially by the Samhitas. As Swami Narayana came to fulfill and not to destroy, he accepted these laws, reserving to himself, however, the right of selection from these rules of conduct.

Thus Swami Narayana made the principles of righteousness an essential element in the life and discipline of his Sampradaya. This Sad-Dharma is not the same as the Varnashram Dharma—the caste rules—, but is something higher than that, the latter being only a part thereof and a subsidiary one at that. Again and again he says this of the Varnashrama Dharma, whereas he believes in the importance of this Sad-Dharma to such an extent that he often says that even if he himself were to order anything against these laws, his followers are not to obey him in such commands of his.

This Sad-Dharma includes in it, in addition to general principles of righteousness, some special rules and regulations as an integral part thereof. While the first regulate the relations of the believers with the world in general, the latter refer to the Satsang itself. The last is a new and sacred family to which one

owes special duties and obligations. The believers are required to have special relations of love and service with one another, and any failure in that respect is considered a greater sin than a similar one in regards to the world. Swami Narayana defines the duties of the believers in the following terms in one of his Vachanamrits :

A true Satsangi is he who has these three things in him; (1) He follows the commands of His Teacher even at the cost of his life, and he never violates them: (2) He has such a deep and firm faith in God that nothing can shake it: (3) He feels a kinship with all those who worship the same Master as himself. This kinship for one's fellow-believers is to be like that which father, mother, son and daughter or wife and husband have for one another. The true Satsangi is he who has in him these three things.

The commandments mentioned in the first of these are those which every believer is required to follow with his entrance into the Fellowship. They are five in number viz., (1) not to eat meat (2) not to drink wine (3) not to commit theft (4) not to commit adultery, and (5) not to contaminate those who are higher than oneself or to be contaminated by those lower than oneself in the social hierarchy of the caste-system by partaking of food with them. To follow these precepts was considered the first step in discipleship, and as one grew in it one had to follow other commands. All these are given in the Shiksha-Patri, the Book of Precepts. They include such virtues as continence, which is to be absolute for the

Sadhus and modified for the laymen, truth, non-violence etc.

This Sad-Dharma has been defined by Swami Narayana himself in reply to the question, viz., which of the two kinds of Dharma, one with Himsa\* i. e. violence and shedding of blood and the other without violence is superior, in these words:

The Dharma with Himsa is for the attainment of the good or goods of this world, and that, besides, is enjoined in order to circumscribe the sphere of violence, whereas the Dharma without Himsa is for salvation and is for the Sadhus. The Dharma with violence has its origin in the love of this world, but the other has its origin in the love for the other world. Therefore, all those who wish to attain salvation, whether sadhus or laymen, should follow this latter kind. Uprichar Vasu followed this Dharma in spite of the fact that he was a king. Therefore the sadhus should not wish ill to any one, whether in thought, word, or deed, nor should they feel proud in any way. On the other hand they should be humble servants of all. The nature which is full of anger belongs to the wicked, whereas it is the duty of the sadhus to be meek. If one might object to this by saying, "How is it possible in that case to rule thousands of people?" the answer is that the King Udhistir† lived in

\*This refers to the sacrifice of animals which was considered by many Hindus even so late as Swami Narayana's time an essential part of Vedic religion. There has been a gradual development from this belief and practice to one of bloodless sacrifice, and Swami Narayana contributed not a little to this, especially in Gujrat.

†This king was the eldest brother of the five Pandavas whose story is the theme of the great Hindu epic called the Mahabharat. He is known for his great righteousness. Bhimsen was one of his brothers.

this saintly manner in spite of the fact that his kingdom was very large. In this he was entirely different from his brother Bhimsen who breathed fire and thunder. There are any number of such hot-tempered people, but the great and the most difficult thing is to be a sadhu.

Thus the Bhakti-Marga of this Sampradaya has been guarded from running into antinomianism. It is united with righteousness or Dharma, and what is still more important, this Bhakti according to Swami Narayana is not merely an emotional love for God, but is the doing of the will of God. In one of the Vachanamrits he says in reply to the question, what are the characteristics of the love for God ?—as follows:—

He who loves God as his Beloved does not go against the will of his Beloved: this is the characteristic of true love. The Gopis had true love for Shri Krishna, and so when the latter prepared to go to Mathura, all of them resolved to keep him in Brindaban even by force if necessary, although this meant for them going against the wishes of their families and public opinion. They were very eager to keep him with them, but at the time when Krishna was leaving they looked at him, and when they found from the look in his eyes that he did not desire to stay, they kept at a distance and were afraid in their heart lest he might cease to love them because they wanted to do something contrary to his will. Hence they did not say anything to him, and Krishna left for Mathura. They did not moreover go even once to see him at Mathura, although that place was only six miles from where they were, because they knew that to do so was against his will, and that if they did it his love for them would cease. Hence the true nature of love is this that whosoever has love for another acts according to the will of the beloved. If he feels that his Beloved wants him to remain

with him, he does so, and if his Beloved is so pleased that he should remain away, he gladly does so. Under no circumstances, however, he goes against the will of him whom he loves. This is the characteristic of love.

In addition to this deeply ethical nature belonging to it, this Bhakti is free from any bondage to Karma. As a matter of fact, Karma plays a very small part in the Philosophy of Swami Narayana. It is true, he, like his philosophic master Sri Ramanuja, believes that all souls are bound by their own Karma from eternity, and that they are lying immobile and inactive before creation in the womb of Maya, which, according to this school of philosophy, is another name for a kind of materialised power of God. From this sleep of ages all these spirits are awakened by the will of God, who alone is the efficient cause of creation and without whom nothing can be living or active. There is no room in this philosophy for the creation of the world or of spirits out of nothing as in Christianity, nor for any such sharp dualism as is taught by Maddhwacharya.

When this creation takes place at the beginning of every Kalpa i. e. the period through which this created universe lives before it is swallowed up again in the womb of Maya from which it springs forth at the will of God, all the spirits take their proper place in the hierarchy of the world according to their Karma which was stored up with them in their sleep. These spirits when born as human beings have a free-will of their own, which they can use well or abuse as they



please. The best use that can be made of this freedom is when the spirits seek their salvation, and adopt for this purpose the supreme path of Bhakti. They are altogether free to do this, and their Karma, whatever it be, can not prevent them from doing it. All that they need to do is to wake up, like the Prodigal Son of the Christian Gospel, from the sleep of self-imposed sin and seek refuge at the feet of God. Swami Narayana and his followers believe that the moment a man becomes a believer and is initiated into the Satsang, he is free from his past Karma, and if at all this Karma has anything to do with him after his initiation, it is only to the extent of making him suffer a little in his body. Even as regards this, they believe that what he may thus suffer by way of punishment for his past Karma, is very little in comparison with what he would have to undergo if he did not join the Satsang. Accordingly all that the believer has to do is to take care of his present Karma which is entirely a matter of his own will and control. If he takes care of the present, the future will take care of itself, and he need not fear anything. Thus this faith and Bhakti make him free from the bondage of all past Karma. He then advances step by step until he reaches the final beatitude which is to be with God Himself in Heaven for eternity. The followers of Swami Narayana believe in several Heavens, the highest of which is known as Akshar-Dhama, and it is here that God Himself lives with the choicest and the dearest of His devotees. They believe that their own Master is no other

than the very God of God, the Purushottama Bhagwan of the Vaishnavas, and that it is he who is the Lord of this highest Heavenly Abode. Some of them believe that Krishna, Rama etc. are not the incarnations of God Himself, but of other persons belonging to the celestial hierarchy, and as such they rule such lower mansions as Goloka, Vaikuntha etc. According to them the final beatitude, which is to reach the Akshar-Dhama, has become possible of attainment only after their Master's advent.

One of the noteworthy characteristics of Swami Narayana's teaching is that it provides against Fatalism of all kinds, whether it be of a mistaken belief in Karma\* or a similar belief in the will of God or His grace. The Law of Karma with many in India is omnipotent and seems to rule everything, yet theoretically even at its worst it never precludes a belief in Free-Will. But this law in the minds of ordinary men is sometimes apt to be construed into a kind of Fatalism, and many people fall a prey to this mistaken belief. They read this law into everything, and all that happens to them individually as well as collectively, they attribute to Karma. The same thing happens with people who make the will of God absolute as in the case of Moslems or some sects of Christians, some of whom carry the doctrine of Predestination or Kismet to most fantastic

\*The doctrine of Karma is not at all fatalistic as is alleged by some Western scholars and Christian missionaries. These start with a prejudice, and hence they misunderstand and sometimes misrepresent it.

extremes. Swami Narayana takes the middle path between these extremes, and hence he does not attribute all that happens to man either to his Karma or to the will of God. He leaves a lot of room for the action of various agencies that are in no way connected with the Karma of man or the will of God, but are the result of interaction between Nature and God, and God and man. There are many things in nature or in the life of man such as pestilence, fire, flood etc, which belong to the no-man's land between good and evil: or such things as war or the rule of a bad prince etc, which belong to the organised or semi-organised though impersonal\* good or evil, and it is up to one according to Swami Narayana, to avoid the danger and especially the moral danger by flying wherever possible from such place or time or company etc, and thus to control one's moral destiny. He extends the sway of human free-will even in this borderland of Fate or Destiny to at least this extent that if one cannot control it, he should at least avoid it wherever possible.

There is a similar fatalism about some kinds of belief in God's grace, and this often leads to slackness in moral effort not to speak of antinomianism. Not only is there no room for such fatalism in Swami Narayana's scheme of salvation, but he warns very emphatically his disciples against the merest tendency towards such an easy belief in God's grace. Once when some disciples

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\*Although war, tyranny etc. have a personal origin, such things have an impersonal character for those who are not directly concerned in regard to their origin or continuance.

of his said that something that they needed to do could be done only by God's grace, he said very characteristically : "Send for some strong rope so that we might bind you with that, for you speak in this way because you do not want to do your part in this thing."

He makes this very clear in one of his Vachanamrits which we reproduce here :

One day after taking his usual seat he sent for Swamis Muktananda, Gopalananda, etc, and then said to them these words : "There is an element of evil fellowship in our Satsang which we must get rid of to-day, and this new chapter which we want to introduce is meant for all, the Sadhus as well as Satsangis of all kinds. What evil is this ? It is the sort of cowardly talk which some people indulge in; e. g. they say that it is not easy to keep God's word or to follow God's commands always, and that all that is required of us is to follow as much as we can, and leave ourselves for the rest to the mercy of God, who is the Saviour of sinners and who as such will forgive and save us. They also say that to meditate on God is not given to every man, and that it is only those with whom God is pleased who can do this. They talk in this weak manner, and by doing so weaken others in their more determined efforts to observe such means of God's pleasure as Dharma, Jnana, Vairagya and Bhakti. Therefore from this day none in our Satsang should talk in this loose manner. You should always talk with courage, and if anyone speak otherwise know him to be impotent. Furthermore, if anyone should speak in this way, let him fast for that day.

He says in another Vachanamrit that those who indulge in such words should be even avoided by others, and that those who speak with boldness and courage

in regard to the conquest of sin and temptation should be sought after as companions. This does not mean that according to Swami Narayana there is no room for God's grace, for in the very next sentence he warns his disciples against these very people whom he had just commended, if they do not feel that the end of all their efforts is to obtain the grace and good pleasure of God.

The Bhakti of this Sampradaya, therefore, is the highest expression of the love for God on the part of the soul evoked by a true knowledge of God and an all-round personal experience of God, experience in which not only the spirit but the mind and the heart and even the body with all its senses participate. This Bhakti is communion, personal, deep and joyful communion with God in Heaven Who is incarnate in the Master, and with His saints on earth. It is also ethical through and through. It has its origin and roots in the pure realms of the spirit, and it transmutes both intellect and emotion. It transforms even the body and makes it divine. This is made possible by what is called Upasana i. e. true knowledge of God or true Doctrine, and hence this Upasana is considered of the highest importance in the Sampradaya. The term Upasana corresponds to what is called Faith or Belief or Doctrine in Christian phraseology. It is mediated through the Scriptures which, according to this Sampradaya, are these: (1) The Vedas; (2) Brahmasutras; (3) the Bhagwad-Gita; (4) Srimad Bhagwat; (5) Vishnu Sahastra Nam; (6) Vasudev Mahatmya; (7) Vidur

Niti and ( 8 ) the Smriti of Yagnavalkya. Sri Ramanuja is considered to be the main authoritative commentator on these, especially the Bhagwad-Gita, and both Swamis Ramauanda and Sahajananda trace their spiritual descent from him. Above all, however, this Upasana is mediated through the teaching and work and life of Swami Narayana himself, who is the very God of God according to this Satsang. All that he has said and done has assumed in the Fellowship an importance which, in some respects, is greater than that of the Scriptures mentioned above, and it is this which is the fountain-head of its Knowledge and Bhakti. Swami Narayana is the goal\* as well as the way, the truth and the life of this Satsang which is so largely his own creation. It must be added here, however, that this represents the crown and culmination of his teaching as it has developed since his time.

## CHAPTER XV

### Literature

It has been already said that this Movement has created since its rise or rather since Swami Narayana gave his serious attention to this matter in the latter part of his ministry, quite a large body of religious literature. With his usual insight he saw that this was essential for the building up of a true Church or Sampradaya. It is true he himself did not go to school, at any rate for any length of time, having left home while he was only ten and spent his early youth in wanderings, but he seems to have known a little of Sanskrit, and what is far more important, he was very well versed in the Hindu Scriptures, and with his marvellous insight had come to know their innermost essence. Though not a scholar or a learned man, he was an all-round religious genius, and therefore he appreciated too well the place of study and learning, especially of the philosophical and theological kind, to be indifferent to it.

However, the need for study and learning in the Movement arose in a peculiar way. It is said that Swami Ramananda had felt the need of this as well as that of good singers, and though Swami Muktananda, his chief disciple, used to write poetry and compose hymns, nothing was done in a systematic manner to remove this deficiency. Swami Narayana was perhaps too busy in the first few years of his ministry to think seriously

of this. The immediate opportunity, however, to do something in the matter came in the following way:

One of the older Sadhus had been sent by Swami Narayana to preach in a certain part of the country. He did not know much of the scriptural lore, but had great faith in his master, and to him his word was everything. In one of the towns which he visited, some Shastris\* asked him the question: "What is your true Self?" To this the Sadhu replied: "The word of our Teacher is our true Self." The Shastris said in reply to this: "The word is only a word, and therefore it cannot be the Self. Hence this is no answer to our question." The Swami replied: "My good sirs, my Self is the word, the word, and the word of my Master and nothing else." Upon this the Shastris looked upon the Sadhu as a fool and mocked at and insulted him in the public.

Although the Sadhu was right in his reply in a way, and what he said had some deep meaning, this way of arguing was far from satisfactory, and therefore Swami Narayana, on coming to know of this episode felt that there was a real lack of knowledge in the Satsang, and with his usual zeal, he set about seriously to remedy this defect. He asked the Sadhus, old and young, to study, and sent Swamis Muktananda and Brahmananda to Surat for the study of Sanskrit. He gave them much honour when they returned after

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\*These are men who are students of Scriptures and correspond to the Scribes among the Jews in the time of Jesus.



finishing their studies, and he encouraged learning in every way among the Sadhus. Those among the Sadhus who were not able to make much progress in their studies were required to make penance, and whosoever was able to study, however young he may be, was honoured as much as the older Sadhus. The result was that in course of time several Sadhus such as Muktananda, Gopalananda, Nityananda, Shukananda etc., became so well-versed in Sanskrit that they not only became a match for the Shastris and the Pandits, but they wrote religious poetry and commentaries on Scriptural books in that language. Swami Narayana also engaged the services of one of the very best Sanskrit scholars of the Province to help these men in this work of theirs.

While this work was being done, it was, however, far from Swami Narayana's mind to give it the place of primacy which it usually held in most of the orthodox Movements. His aim was to create a Literature which, in his own words, could be understood by old women who lived by spinning, meaning thereby that it should be simple enough to be understood by the commonest people. In course of time he fully succeeded in doing this, and to-day we have in the vernacular a large body of literature belonging to the Movement which is of great spiritual help to both the learned and the simple. This literature is of a very high order, and though large in quantity and many-sided, there is a remarkable unity pervading the whole. We have in it a beautiful reflection of the life and work of the Master

and his Movement, and as such it is a revelation in itself. It is steeped in wonder because the writers are sure that they are in possession of the secret of life, and that there is opened to their gaze the Highest of Heavens and the very God of God. Because of this it is pervaded with a sense of blessedness and joy, and it has a charm and simplicity all its own.

Some of the best books in this literature are biographies of Swami Narayana, and these are in both poetry and prose. The place of these in the Sampradaya is very like that of the Gospels among the Christians, and new biographies of the Master are being written even to-day. Some of these are pretty big in size, especially those written in verse. Perhaps the best of these is *Bhakta Chintamani*\* written by Swami Nishkulananda who was originally a disciple of Swami Ramananda and then of his young Master whom he served all the time the latter was in flesh. He was a carpenter by caste and gave up the world under the influence of Swami Narayana. He had real poetic powers, which were used and developed from the start, under the fostering care of the Master, and in course of time he became one of the foremost poets of the Movement.

The book *Bhakta Chintamani* is a large work, and is one of especial value inasmuch as it is written

\**Chintamani* is a kind of legendary jewel which, when possessed, gives its owner whatever he desires. In the present case the life of the Master is such a jewel for the devotee who wants salvation.

by one who was a disciple of Swami Ramananda and was at first jealous of his young successor. Its author was older than his new Master by about fifteen years, and had joined the fellowship earlier than Swami Narayana by about twelve years. He, however, very soon became a close disciple of Swami Narayana and a Sadhu leaving wife and children within a couple of years after the latter took charge of the Fellowship. He himself relates this conversion of his which was the result of his being with the Master while passing through a desert, in the course of which journey he witnessed a miracle of changing salt water into fresh water to slake his thirst of which he was almost dying. It was, however, the fellowship of the Master which worked the greater miracle of changing a common disciple into a saint, or an ordinary carpenter into a great architect of temples and a poet who created jewels of real poetry.

Soon after his becoming a Sadhu, Laljee, whose name was changed into Nishkulananda, was asked by the Master to write a book called Yamadanda i. e. the Punishment given by the Judge after Death, a book which was published in the year 1860 Samvat. This shows how even in those early days Swami Narayana's mind was directed towards the creation of Literature.

As for the book Bhakta-Chintamani, much of it was written in the life-time of Swami Narayana and published within a year of his passing away. It has 164 chapters and has in all about 8527 verses. In the

first hundred chapters, the author has narrated the events of the life of Swami Narayana from the beginning to the end in close detail. In the next five he describes the infinite glory and the power of the Master, and in the following six he gives the names of the Sadhus, their vows etc. In fifteen more he gives the names of the lay-followers, both men and women, with the names of their villages or towns, castes, qualities etc. In thirty one more he gives the miracles of Swami Narayana, and in the last six he describes the Heaven of Heavens to which the Master returned after finishing his work here. The book is, thus, as full as it could be, and gives us an authoritative life of Swami Narayana from the pen of one who had known him from the very beginning of his advent into the Fellowship to the end. The one resounding note of this work is of abounding joy and blessedness, born of divine assurance that the Deity Himself has lived and worked and eaten and drunk with his disciples, and that this has changed the face of the world and everything therein. Because of this advent of God among them, not only human beings but animals and trees and plants which rendered any kind of service to Swami Narayana, yea, the very stones and dust of the streets, and of the highways and byways whereupon the Master walked have undergone transformation and partaken of the divine character. This is the prevailing note not only of this book but of most of the literature of the Movement, and the present writer knows of no Literature in the world, wherein the deep founts of Joy within the human heart

have been so opened to the gaze of a wondering world, or where they have found such a rich lyric expression as here.

Later on another and a bigger biography along the same lines was written by one of the well-known poets of Gujrat called Kavi Dalpatram who gave some years of his life to the writing of this work. This book is called *Sri Hari Lilamrit*, i. e. the Nectar of the Life-Story of the Lord God, and is a classic as a biography. In this work as well as in the one mentioned above, the chronological order has been preserved, and from them one can get a reliable account of the life and work of the Master.

Another work in prose has been published recently in three volumes, wherein we have a large collection of stories and incidents relating to the life of Swami Narayana. There is no attempt made, however, in this book to connect these in any order, and each incident is given as if it were complete in itself. This book is called *Sri Hari Charitra Chintamani*.

In addition to these big works, there are several biographical fragments, two or three of which were written by disciples who knew the master. These have a very simple title such as "Stories of Swami Adbhutananda, of Prasadanaanda etc." and both in content and form they are like the Christian Gospels. There are other fragments written by disciples of the first disciples, and these are collections of stories relating to the Master which they have culled from various

sources. Altogether, these, fragmentary as they are, throw a great deal of light on the life and work of Swami Narayana and the atmosphere which he was able to create, and as such their value as authentic sources of information is very great.

A small biography has been recently published by a young man called Mashroowala. It is perhaps the only life of the Master which may be called a modern one. It is rationalistic in its interpretation and eschews the miraculous element to some extent.

Allied to this biographical literature there is a large body of religious songs composed in praise and adoration of Swami Narayana. These describe him in all sorts of activities, attitudes and positions, and are meant to inspire devotion in the heart of his followers. Swamis Muktananda, Brahmananda, Nishkulananda and others took part in the creation of this kind of literature, and it has a significance all its own. The first of these two had taken a vow that they should compose a certain number of songs every day, and Swami Muktananda, old and infirm as he was, left off composing and writing these on the day before he passed away, and even this he did at the express command of Swami Gopalananda whom the Master had appointed as his successor.

In addition to these songs, a large number of didactic and other kinds of poems were written for the edification of the followers as well as the general public. Poems were written to show why widows should not

be suttees, but lead pure and pious and serviceable lives. Also songs of a religious character were composed to be sung at the time of marriage in place of those full of low wit and humour which it was usual to sing on such occasions.

The most important part, however, of the literature of this Sampradaya consists of some books written under the direct and personal inspiration of Swami Narayana himself. While in others we have the reflection of his personality coming to us more or less in an indirect way, here we have the impress of his own personality as from himself. These are (1) his Epistles: (2) Satsangi-Jeevan: (3) Vachanamrit and (4) Shiksha-Patri.

The Epistles have been recently published, and they are about fifty in all. Evidently these are not all that he wrote, but they are those that were preserved for over a century as a most precious and sacred possession by some of the Sadhus. One finds among these even the letter which he wrote soon after his arrival in the Fellowship to Swami Ramananda. Those were days when there was no postal service in the land, and the letters had to be sent by special couriers. As several of these letters were circular in character, and were written to the general body of disciples, it seems to have been the custom to copy them in most of the places, and it was thus that they came to be preserved. Most of these letters are doctrinal as well as disciplinary, and though they are altogether unpolished from the

literary point of view and are even rough and uncouth, they show very well on what a high plane Swami Narayana habitually lived and worked. They come fresh from his heart, and as such contain real though rugged nuggets of gold.

Satsangi-Jeevan is the biggest work that the Master got written under his personal supervision. Its very name is characteristic of him and the Movement which he led. "The Life of the Disciple in the midst of the Fellowship" is a free rendering of the title, and the book deals with the life and work of Swami Narayana himself together with the Principles and Teaching of the Fellowship. It is written in Sanskrit, is in five parts and has nearly seventeen thousand verses in it. It has been recently translated into Gujarati. It embraces the Life of the Fellowship in all its details and is remarkable in parts. The writer of the book was Swami Shatananda.

Two jewels have been cut out from this book in the shape of two small books called Dharmamrita (Nectar of Righteousness) and Nishkam Shudhdhi, which is a sort of Laws of Penance. The first of these is true to its name and has a taste of nectar in it in spite of the fact that it is a book of laws for the conduct of the Sadhus. The second contains rules for penance in case of violation of these laws. Because of the fact that behind these rules and laws is the great aim of attaining God, they are transfigured into lovely forms full of the beauty of holiness.



The book of books, however, of this Sampradaya is the one that is known as Vachanamrita i. e. the Nectar of Discourses, a book which has already attained the position of a classic in the vernacular literature of the Province, and which may well take its place among the religious classics of the world. It contains the essence of the Doctrine of the Movement. It is not, however, devoted to philosophical or theological exposition as such, and whatever little there is of this is subordinated entirely to the religious and spiritual teaching which was the primary and sole aim of the Master. Because of this it has a distinct note of authority born of profound personal experience, and both language and thought have so matched one another as to make a beautiful and harmonious whole. In the entire volume of several hundred pages it would be difficult to find a single word that is redundant or out of place, or a thought that is unnecessary or out of keeping with the plan of salvation unfolded in the book. Altogether it is a great work and a remarkable monument of the wonderful teacher that Swami Narayana was.

The book is the outcome of various talks in the form of questions and answers that Swami Narayana had with his disciples in the general assembly of his followers in different places. There are 262 talks in all, and most of them are in the form of answers to single questions. These Vachans or Sayings cover a period of about a decade at the end of Swami Narayana's life, and even for this period they represent only a fraction of his work as a Teacher. They are a selection

from a much larger body, almost thrice the size, of reports taken of such conversations, and the selection and editing thereof was done by a sort of editorial board of four men, viz., Swamis Muktananda, Gopalananda, Nityananda and Shukananda. The last of these was a kind of private secretary to the Master, and it is said that the first draft was made by him. The book comes to us with all the greater authority because of these united labours. It is devoted to the teaching of pure doctrine in such an easy, simple and attractive manner that even the simplest would not find the book difficult to understand, nor the wisest too simple. There is strong meat here for those who can digest such, and also milk for those who can not take any higher fare. One peculiarity of the book is that every one of these two hundred and sixty two talks is prefaced with a short pen-picture of Swami Narayana with the particular dress he wore on the occasion, the idea being not to present the teaching only, but together with it the teacher himself, and thus to impress his personality on the mind of all who would read the book. Here is a sample of one of these pictures, the first one in the book :

In the year Samvat 1876 on the fourth day of the bright half of the month of Margashirsh Shrijee Maharaj had come in the evening to the residence of the Sadhus in the courtyard of Dada Khachar in Gadhada. He was dressed in white clothes and before him was assembled the company of the Sadhus as well as the believers of the various parts of the country. Then the Maharaj asked the question :.....

The chief object of the book is to present the Master as an Ideal Teacher, and so the editors have strictly confined themselves to the work of giving a proper picture of the Master as he looked at the particular moment when the talk took place, and to giving an exact report of the conversation so far as the substance is concerned, while changing the form and polishing the language a little here and there to make it more readable. All that the editors have added of their own at the end of a few of these talks, in the course of which the Master himself says that he needed to do this or that for his own development, is that he says this only for their sake, and that he himself is in no need of doing it, himself being perfect God. Altogether the book is one of the greatest in Hindu religious literature, and it alone is sufficient to show the greatness of Swami Narayana as a Teacher.

The book called *Siksha Patri* was composed under the personal supervision of Swami Narayana and it bears the impress of his character and personality on every line of it. Perhaps more than any other book of this Sampradaya it is his creation. It is an Epistle of Precepts containing 212 verses, and is meant to be a kind of Law-Book or Samhita for the Sampradaya. The entire book is to be read or repeated every day by the believer, for it contains the essence of the doctrine and laws and rules for all belonging to the Sampradaya. In spite of the fact that it is such a small thing, it is thoroughly comprehensive so far as the regulation

of the life of the believers in all important matters, including even the economic and sanitary life, is concerned.

In what has been said in this chapter we have drawn only a rough outline of a large and well-rounded body of literature belonging to this Sampradaya. This literature is truly great, great in spirit as well as form, and there is not a thought nor a word in all these books written under the direct supervision of the Master or by his followers, which would jar upon the most sensitive ear, ethically or in any other way. Everything is written with a view to edification, moral and spiritual, of the reader, and the aim that has always been kept in sight is the salvation of souls. The Literature is free from any tendency towards intellectualism or emotionalism.

It is a literature that any one can read, the wisest as well as the simple, the saint as well as the sinner, and be the better for it. It is full of a constraining power, and the atmosphere pervading it is lofty and elevating. Much of it has a charm and attractiveness which even the best romances fall short of. Many of these books the present writer has read again and again, and he has been surprised at the perennial freshness which he finds in them. It is so because of the fact that this Literature centres round a Romance of the highest kind, the Romance of Revelation and Incarnation. Here is the manifestation of a personality who reveals a new world and a new order of life, or rather incarnates in himself the Divine and becomes for his followers the very Holy of Holies.

Everything that he says or does partakes of Divinity, and whatever he handles or touches becomes holy and lovely. The very earth which he trod, the air he breathed, the food he ate, and the water he drank, all these and much more, however insignificant it be, became full of a new and divine meaning. It is the story of all this which forms the subject of this Literature. If things that are inanimate and lifeless put on a lovelier and holier aspect at the mere touch of the Master, how much more would this be the case when he graciously talked to people or taught his disciples and ate and played and laughed with them? Heaven itself and even the Highest of Heavens—there are many of these according to the belief of this Sampradaya—is revealed to the wondering gaze of the disciples while they are in flesh and blood, and after their sojourn here is over, they are sure of a place in the Mansions of the Blessed, and their Master Himself comes in person to take them there. It is the history of such a life lived from day to day, but full of a meaning that transcends all time, and which has in it the positive contents of eternity, it is this which makes the warp and woof of much of this Literature, and it is, therefore, of a kind which can stand comparison with any in the world.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Organization of the Satsang

Swami Narayana, besides being a great Teacher and Leader of men, was a great organizer as well. In this as in other respects he was an all-round spiritual genius of the first rank. We have already seen how he taught and led men, and we shall devote the present chapter to a study of the constitution and organization of the Sampradaya as he created them.

This religious movement, in the time of Ramananda Swami, was centred in the Sadhus. In other words it was an order of Sadhus or Monks with a circle of disciples among laymen. The Sadhus used to go about preaching their Gospel and making disciples. They did quite a little in this way, but the movement was very far from assuming the form of a great religious organization such as the Samgha of the Buddhists or the Jains, or such as any of the Sampradayas of the Vaishnavas. It lacked in spiritual power, mutual cohesion and strength of numbers to be this.

Ramananda Swami was undoubtedly a man of great spiritual power, and his insight into character was equally great. This is why he selected Sahajananda (Swami Narayana) for the assumption of leadership of the Satsang, although the latter was a mere stripling and had been in the Satsang only for a short time. But this very selection revealed the weakness of the

movement, for after the passing away of Ramananda, the Satsang was broken up in several parts, and almost every one of the principal disciples rebelled against the youthful leader and started work on his own. The solitary exception to this, as we have seen before, was Swami Muktananda, the man who had perhaps more reason to complain of the arrangement made by his Teacher than any one else. It took all the extraordinary spiritual power of the youthful leader to quell this rebellion within the first few years of his ministry. Not only did he do this, but he extended the work on all sides making it both broader and deeper.

It seems that for several years after assuming the leadership, Swami Narayana continued to work through the old organization without changing it in any essential so far as the outward form was concerned. The difference, however, between the movement as it was in the time of Ramananda and as it was now—and it was a great difference—consisted in the marvellous outpouring of the spirit that had come along with the latter's ministry. The entire movement went through the fire of great suffering and sacrifice, and came out very much enriched in every way, in purity, power, devotion and service. The fruits of these were seen everywhere in the increased number of disciples which ran into tens of thousands, and especially in the changed lives of hundreds of Sadhus and thousands of laymen and laywomen.

We have already seen how the body of Sadhus increased since Swami Narayana became the head of

the Satsang. From a few scores, their number ran into as many hundreds within a decade or so, and by the end of the Master's ministry their number is variously estimated from two to five thousand. This in itself was an extraordinary achievement, perhaps unsurpassed in any movement which did not have all the sanctions of orthodoxy, especially when we consider the short period in which this was done.

To keep such a large number of Sadhus together in peace and concord is no small task for any man, however great he be. They were drawn from all classes of people and different parts of India. Some of these were even leaders of sadhus in their own religious communities before they became disciples of Swami Narayana. They were all put under a discipline which was as rigorous as it could be and it was their deep loyalty to and love for their Master which made it possible for them to live in the Satsang.

It was, however, in regard to their mutual relations that the first difficulty arose. Most of them believed that their loyalty to Swami Narayana was all that was necessary, and some may have even felt that apart from him they were all equal. They were all Paramhansas and as such men who were supposed to live at their highest and from within. Such men in India usually own no outward authority and are usually considered to be beyond the pale of any organization. That they lived a life of extreme renunciation and moral rigour was no guarantee that they would always



be free from spiritual pride. On the other hand, such people are apt to be most subject to pride and a sense of false independence. This is what actually happened in the case of some at least, with the result that men like Swami Muktananda and other principal disciples were not honoured as they should have been. A sort of anarchy seems to have prevailed for a time in the mutual relations of the Sadhus, and matters came to a head when two Sadhus, in all probability from among the prominent ones, spoke in an insolent and depreciatory way\* of Swami Muktananda in regard to his victory in an important controversy that he had with orthodox Pundits in the city of Baroda. The Master was very much hurt by this, and saw in this lack of respect for even such a one as Muktananda a deep-seated disease which was destroying the very life of the Satsang.

Indeed, things seem to have become so bad at one moment that Swami Narayana even thought of leaving the Satsang and retiring into solitude. With this in view when one of the big Conventions was over, he asked his chief disciples from among the Sadhus and laymen to remain with him for a short time, and then laid the proposal before them.

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\*Jealousies of this kind were rife among the disciples of Jesus Christ, and we know that he was very much pained by them. In modern times Keshub Chunder Sen suffered a good deal from a similar trouble, and much of his work was undone by the mutual jealousies of his disciples. In the present case the trouble was of short duration and it never assumed any dangerous proportions.

As they would not even hear of it, he consented to remain only on one condition, viz., that he should appoint four Sadgurus, and that whomsoever he should select for this purpose they all should accept as their spiritual elders and give them honour almost equal to what they gave him. On their accepting this proposal, he appointed Swamis Muktananda, Brahmananda, Chaitanyananda and Mahabhavananda as Sadgurus. He got seats made for them by his side, commanded them to sit on them and asked others to give their homage to them. Thus came the institution of the Sadgurus whose number was increased later on to twelve.

This was no small victory for Swami Narayana. It was easy for the Sadhus to look upon him as their Guru and even more, but it was very hard for them to look upon those whom they had treated so long as their equals as spiritual elders. Besides, there were sure to be some among the Sadhus who might well feel that they had as much right to be Sadgurus as these. Some of them were sure to be superior to one or two of the Sadgurus in some matters. It was, therefore, no small sacrifice on their part to be reconciled to this new institution. As Kabir, the great Indian mystic and saint, has said. "It is easy to give up mammon and woman, but the hardest thing to give up is pride." This is especially true of those who have renounced the world, for Pride is their last resort and their all. This was now surrendered by them and a new chapter began in their life as well as that of the Sampradaya. The Sadhus were divided into four

bodies, and over each of these was appointed one of the Sadgurus. The result of this measure was greater order and cohesion among them, and thus a kind of group-loyalty as well as devotion towards those who were more advanced than themselves was created.

This gave rise to another problem, though a minor one, in course of time. This group-loyalty became another stumbling-block, for the various groups came to be known by the names of their superiors, and there sprang up mutual jealousy among them. For this the Master soon found a proper remedy. Once when all the Sadhus had gathered together, he asked each of them whose disciple he was. The Sadhus replied to this by giving the names of their immediate heads. Upon this Swami Narayana in open assembly said, "I am now without a disciple, for the Sadhus belong to this or that Sad-Guru." At this all were ashamed and said, "No, Maharaj, we are your disciples first and then of the Sad-Gurus, and that is because of your express command." Swami Narayana replied to this by saying, "If you are my disciples, then you will have to go to those groups to which I assign you." They all readily consented to do this, whereupon he formed new groups, advising the Sad-Gurus at the same time to create in the minds of their followers a loyalty to the entire body.

Later on another principle of order was introduced in the movement. The different parts of the country in which this Fellowship had spread are called Kathia-

wad, Cutch and Gujrat, and the Sadhus were divided according to these divisions of the country, and their work was confined mainly to the part of the province assigned to them. This was done in order that there may be no overlapping or duplication of work. Still later when the Mandirs came to be built with their respective images such as Nara Narayana, Laxmi Narayana and Vasudeva Narayana in Ahmedabad, Vartal and Gadhada respectively, the groups were known by the names of these. This also gave rise to rivalry between them, and so once Swami Narayana in a convention asked them to sit in their respective groups and after this was done, he said, "Now those who are of Swami Narayana, come here and sit by my side." At this they all became conscious of their mistake and took a wholesome lesson.

A word must be said here about the Sad-Gurus. It may be thought from the above that they were to blame to a certain extent for this spirit of rivalry between different groups. Perhaps nothing could be farther from the truth. As in most other things, Swami Narayana was very fortunate in his principal disciples. He had his winnowing-fan in hand all the time, and only the true ones could stand the fiery test and fierce discipline that he applied to and imposed on them. The wonder is that hundreds remained with him to the end under all this strain and stress. Again it was from this number that he very carefully selected those who were to be the leaders, and who came to occupy the front rank among the disciples. The number of

such principal disciples was not small, and each of them was a man remarkable in his own way. Moreover, each had his own special spiritual excellence called "power"\* in the phraseology of the Sampradaya. It may be said that the appointment of the Sadgurus was one of the most important steps towards the crystallization of the Movement into a Sampradaya or a Church.

The extraordinary powers of Swami Narayana as a leader are seen not only in the organization of this large number of Sadhus into a compact, united and disciplined body, but also in the work of uniting them to the much larger number of lay-disciples. They all together—the Sadhus and the Satsangis—constituted the Satsang, and the entire body stood closer to his heart than any of its constituent parts. It may be doubted whether the distinction between the Sadhus and the Satsangis was as sharp as may be imagined from what has been said so far. One finds as many people among the Satsangis, both men and women, as among the Sadhus, whose devotion and loyalty to their Master are considered ideal, and who are commended by Swami Narayana himself as examples to be followed by all.

There was, nevertheless, a broad distinction between the Sadhus and the Satsangis, and it was one of the principal duties of the former to lead the latter on the path of salvation. In order to do this, the

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\* This is the same as what is called 'gift' in the Epistles of St. Paul.

Sadhus kept on moving from place to place for most part of the year. This kept the Satsangis in close touch with the Sadhus. This was not all, however, since it gave very little opportunity for the Satsangis to come close together and know one another. To meet this and other needs Swami Narayana began holding Conventions called Samaiyas in the phraseology of the Sampradaya twice every year in two different parts of the province. The Conventions were occasions for spiritual festivities on a large scale. Thousands used to gather together at these times, and while their spiritual needs were ministered unto, they took part in important deliberations concerning the Movement. Problems relating to the organization and the constitution of the body were discussed, new plans and programmes of work were made, new disciplines were formulated, and above all these men and women drawn from various parts came to know and share the joys and sorrows of one another.

A further step in the organization of the Sampradaya was taken with the building of the Mandirs, i. e. the Temples. This work was started in the third and the last decade of the Master's ministry. There were a few Mandirs in the Movement in the time of Swami Ramananda, but these were given up by Swami Narayana to the seceding Sadhus when he became the leader. Since then the Movement was carried on without the help of any temples. All these years Swami Narayana was too busy carrying on his spiritual work to think of these things, and the antagonisms and perse-

cutions he had to face, and the political and social disorder of the times, all these were big handicaps to the Movement in its having Mandirs and property of its own. Meantime, the British Power had been firmly established, and the number of disciples had grown into tens of thousands. All this made it necessary to give the Movement ' a local habitation and a name ', and the Mandirs came to be built. The Movement was evolving from an Order of Sadhus with a circle of disciples among laymen into a fully-orbed Church or Sampradaya with whatever advantages and disadvantages there were in the change. The new faith was finding a visible embodiment, and the high mysticism and spirituality of the Movement were assuming a more practical and social character.

Swami Narayana started this work with characteristic zeal and on a scale the like of which was not witnessed in the Province of Gujrat before. Within a very short time three big temples in important centres of the Movement viz., Ahmedabad, Vartal and Gadhada, were built, and images of Nara Narayana, Laxmi Narayana and Gopinathjee were installed in them with due ceremony. Many small temples also were built in different parts of the country, and thus the Movement came to have within a very short time quite a large number of them. Since then, their number has grown much and it probably runs into a few thousands. All these are a remarkable monument to the spiritual genius and powers of organization of the Master, for more than anything else it is these Mandirs that have

stabilized the Movement. The Sadhus may come and go, but these are always with the laymen ministering unto their spiritual needs.

These Mandirs are, besides, the fruit of remarkable co-operation between the Sadhus and the Satsangis, and they also testify to the high sense of the dignity of labour that Swami Narayana had. They are built almost entirely, if not altogether, by the voluntary labour of the Sadhus and laymen. It has been already said that the Sadhus were drawn from all classes of people, and the same was the case with laymen. It was a new departure, however, for Swami Narayana to make all these people, and especially the Sadhus, work in this manner, for it went clearly against the recognized convention that the Sadhus were above doing any manual work. This was not done, however, without some hesitation on the part of some of the Sadhus, and Swami Narayana himself led the way in this as in other things, and in order to set an example he carried even heavy stones on his head. Visitors to the Mandir at Vartal are shown thirty-seven bricks built into the Mandir, thirty-five in one place and two in another, which were carried to these places by the Master himself.

Another time when a Mandir was being built, a mason demanded some chunam\*, and as there was no one to give him this, Swami Narayana, who happened to be close by, took a pot full of it and carried it to

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\* This is lime mixed with sand and water and is used for cementing stones.



him. Seeing him do this Swami Nityananda ( one of his principal disciples ) came running, and requested him not to bear such a load when there were so many to do it. To this the Master replied that such work was a part of Bhakti of God, and that he liked to give his Bhakti with his body as well. Not only did he set an example in this way, but he encouraged those who worked hard by word and loving embrace, which last was considered as the greatest reward that a disciple could get from the Master. He would embrace in this way even the poorest of them, and he is said to have done this once or twice even before some of these workers had washed the dust and mud from their clothes and bodies.

Some of these big temples are three-spired buildings, and they have much architectural beauty. The images are kept in three separate rooms each of which is under a spire, and they are usually in pairs. If there is a third one along with these, it is usually that of Swami Narayana. In case there is no image of his, the usual custom is to put his picture in one of these, and along with this picture are kept some such relics of his as his turban etc. Many of these temples have large residential quarters attached to them where hundreds of Sadhus could be easily accomodated. Twice every day worship is offered in these temples when hundreds of people congregate together, and the entire service with the various acts of prostrations and praise, confession and the recital of the creed etc, is full of devotion and inspiration. The Movement expresses its

deeply spiritual character in this as in other things, and the presence of one at a few, nay, even one of these services, is enough to show the vital character of the new faith. Such was the impression that the present writer had at his first attendance at this service, and one of his friends, a much-travelled man in India and outside, felt after a short stay of a day or two in Gadhada that that was one of the few places in India where he had come face to face with true living religion. These big temples are open to women also for worship.

Simultaneously with this building of temples was going on the chapter of intensive study on the part of the Sadhus and the creation of literature. Under all these multifarious activities, however, Swami Narayana was always keenly intent upon the main objective for himself as for all, which was to have a close and deep communion with God as is evident from the following little story. While the Mandir at Vartal was being built, he, one day, called to himself all those Sadhus who were studying, and told them that he had built a place for them called Hari Mandap where they could retire for meditation. He added that the place had been used by some for this purpose to their great advantage; and he asked them to use the same. To this one of them answered by saying that it was very difficult for them to do so, especially as they were burdened with their studies and that was on their mind all the time. To this he replied that they should act like the women who draw water from a well. These have their mind set on two things equally at the same time, viz., on

their feet which are planted firmly on the bank of the well and on the pot which is thrown into the well. He added that they should do likewise i. e. keep their mind fixed on God and also progress in their studies as knowledge was essential for the spread of the Satsang.

Another place in the same Mandir is associated with his memory in connection with the following incident. While he was sitting there, a man and his wife came to him, and the woman said to him with much sorrow that she had no son. To this Swami Narayana replied that he would give her one immediately, and putting into her husband's lap a nephew of theirs, a boy of three years, asked them to adopt him as their son which they did. His words to them uttered on this occasion were these : " He to whom we give our inheritance is our son. "

One thing leads to another and this was very true in the case of these Mandirs. They became a formidable problem in themselves. They constituted wealth and property, and the question naturally presented itself as to who should own them. This was a potential source of great temptation to some of the Sadhus, and the danger to the whole movement that lay in this became gradually manifest to Swami Narayana. He was too powerful and watchful to allow any of his followers to be a prey to such a temptation in his own life-time, but he must leave the world one day and therefore he had to provide against such a contingency. These Mandirs were built in various Native States, small and big, and in British territory, and as

the British power was being just established, it was not possible to make these into a trust. Under these circumstances once the powerful hand of the Master was removed, the entire fabric would have fallen to pieces, and almost every Mandir would have been a bone of contention between various factions and groups in course of time.

At first Swami Narayana tried various experiments to solve this problem, but without much success. After much anxious and careful thought and as a last resort, he determined to install as Acharyas of this Sampradaya members of his own family. He had many precedents for this in the history of Hinduism, and the idea had something in it to commend itself to him. He had to make his choice between a kind of hereditary monarchy, and a sort of dictatorship handed down from one dictator to another, the only two alternatives open to him in those days when democracy was neither known nor practicable in India. He, however, hedged this kind of hereditary episcopacy round with many wholesome rules and regulations, and made it constitutional to a large extent.

Before he could do this, however, he had to get in touch with his family from which he had separated more than thirty years ago. This was not an easy matter as may be supposed. During all this period he had neither heard from nor written to them, and his family had long since forgotten him giving him up for one who was entirely lost or dead. He, therefore,

sent two trusted and capable Sadhus to find out whatever members of his family lived, and because these had moved from place to place, they had much difficulty in finding them. They located them, however, and brought some of them to Swami Narayana. Even to do this was not easy because these relations could not be at once persuaded to take a journey which took weeks of travel, and moreover, they were not quite sure if it was not some kind of a hoax got up for them. However, at first a couple of male members of the family came, and after they were sure as to who it was that had thus called them, the rest of the family followed.

Swami Narayana had two brothers one of whom died after he came to Gujrat leaving some children. He adopted one of these, a boy, as his own, and he did the same with a son of his other brother. He established these two nephews of his as Acharyas in the year 1882 of the Samvat era, dividing the entire country into two parts between them. A well-defined line was drawn from Dwarka in the westernmost part of India to Calcutta at the other end, and thus were created the "northern division" as the sphere of work for one, and the "southern division" for the other.

Soon after he did this, he wrote his book called "Shiksha-Patri", wherein he defined the duties of all his followers, viz., the Acharyas, the Sadhus and the Satsangis, men, women etc. This book may well be called the Samhita of the Satsang, and the Vachanamrit its Shruti.

It is not unlikely that Swami Narayana, while making these arrangements, viz., the installation of the members of his own family as the Acharyas of the Sampradaya, may have been moved, though partly, by another consideration. His movement was one of radical reform, though that reform was chiefly in the realm of moral and spiritual life. Undoubtedly this brought great reforms in its wake in social life, but the movement was not one of social reform as the term came to be understood a generation later in India. The most important question facing the leader was in regard to the relations of his movement with Varnashrama, i. e. the caste-system. Swami Narayana had taken great liberties with it, perhaps more than any other leader of a great orthodox movement in India, but this was only in the case of the Sadhus, and that too to meet a great emergency. As has been said before, it was a sort of interim arrangement that he adopted for himself and his followers. For this, however, he had much to suffer from the older Sampradayas which naturally looked upon him and his movement as heterodox, and cast a slur on it in the eyes of the public. Some people openly expressed a doubt whether Swami Narayana himself was a Brahmin, more so as he ate with all. A doubt of this kind would have been a great handicap, almost fatal, to his movement as soon as he was removed. It was to prevent such a catastrophe overtaking his work that he may have been led, as an additional motive, to appoint as his successors members of his own family.

There was another modification made about the same time which deserves some notice. It has been said that Swami Narayana had made all the Sadhus into Paramhansas in the early part of his career and he continued to do this for over a decade. This meant that the Sadhus were above caste rules and regulations. In this a change was now made, and the Sadhus were divided into two bodies, viz., the Brahmcharis and the Sadhus. The former of these are of the Brahmin caste, and the only difference between them and the others is that the Brahmcharis do not eat with the latter and that they put on white clothes, while the latter put on the usual orange-coloured dress of the Sadhus. The Sadhus of the Sudra caste also eat separately and put on white clothes. They are called Palas and they are employed chiefly as guards or attendants in the mandirs, and hence they are free to keep arms. It is not to be understood from this that these have no teaching ministry to perform, provided they have the necessary gift for it.

In all these matters Swami Narayana acted as one who was in no sense a social revolutionary. In spite of the fact that he, in common with all the great teachers of the Bhagwat Dharma, opened the way of salvation to all people including the Untouchables and the non-Hindus, he would do nothing which would even distantly suggest that he was out to subvert the Hindu social order. In this he followed most of the great Hindu teachers who had preceded him for at least a thousand years. In this connection it is interesting

to remark that his own contemporary Raja Ram Mohan Roy was as little disposed to disturb the Caste-system as Swami Narayana, in spite of the fact that he was far more modern in his outlook on life than Swami Narayana. The successor of the great Raja in the leadership of the Brahma Samaj, viz., Devendra Nath Tagore preferred a schism in the Samaj to a break with the caste-system. Since his time, with the solitary exception of Keshub Chunder Sen, no one among the religious teachers of New India has led a frontal attack on the Varnashrama Dharma. It is no wonder, then, if Swami Narayana, who was the earliest among these and the least affected by modern ideas, did not go in for revolutionary reform in social matters.

The principle that Swami Narayana followed in this matter, viz., not to interfere in a revolutionary manner with the social order of a people while working for their salvation is the one that was followed by Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ. The immediate disciples of the latter and St. Paul, the Fathers of the Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church in all its long history and even the Protestant Churches until recent times worked on the same principle. There was no institution in India, not even Untouchability, however wicked it be, which could be compared in point of iniquity and cruelty with that of Slavery, and yet it was tolerated by the Christian Church almost until our own times. The so-called Social Gospel in the West is a modern discovery, and it owes its origin as much to modern Science and Industrialism as to Christianity.



It is interesting to observe that according to the scheme as it was left by Swami Narayana, the Sadhus are now the only representatives of the Paramhansas of the old days. They alone have the full status of Sannyasis and even more, a status from which the Brahmin Brahmacharis on one side and the Sudra Palas on the other, are excluded. The Brahmacharis are more or less in the position of priests, which was the necessary result of the institution of the Mandirs. When these came into existence first, according to the orthodox Hindu convention, Swami Narayana had to engage Brahmin priests to offer worship to the images, and sometimes these were from among the unbelievers as there were not enough men available from among the believers. These proved hirelings and the movement was too vital to tolerate such a state of things. It was perhaps the need of such priests from the community itself that may have been one of the causes which led the Master to keep the Brahmins who wanted to be Sadhus into a separate body. This is, however, an anomaly in the movement, and the other is that at the head of all these Sadhus and Brahmacharis stand the two Acharyas who are Grihasthas, i. e. householders. One thing, however, is very clear, viz., that by these arrangements Swami Narayana affirmed the reality and validity of the world. The Movement was no longer an other-worldly body or an ascetic order of Sadhus, but was one that took a very definite place in the life-stream of the world, and sought to change it without denying it. This has been the prevailing note of Hinduism at

its best, and it is especially so with what is called the Bhagwat Dharma.

The result of these manifold arrangements on the part of Swami Narayana is that the Sampradaya still remains a compact, united and growing body. It has had so far no schism which, in itself, is no small advantage, and the number of the disciples still runs into some hundreds of thousands. This is no small thing especially as the movement is not modern in its outlook, and hence all the tendencies of the age are against it. There are about twelve hundred Sadhus which, in view of the times, may be considered a good number. What is of still greater significance, however, is that the Sampradaya continues to live on a high ethical and spiritual plane, and the order of Sadhus shows yet no signs of moral decadence of any kind. It must be said, however, that there is a sad lack of dynamic power and zeal for the propagation of the faith such as were witnessed on such a remarkably large scale in the time of the Master. The Movement needs to re-orient itself very much to the needs of the present age, and thus to take its proper place in the reconstruction of India and the world. It is a real pity that a very large number of the members of this body have no idea of the wonderful heritage that has been left by their Master. Their attention is directed more to the conservation of the gains that have been made in the past than to the winning of new realms, and very often these gains are thought of in terms of the things of this world. Because of the great faith that the Movement evoked in the

past and is still evoking in large numbers of people, there has been a great accumulation of property. This in itself is far from a blessing. Rather it has acted as a positive hindrance, and has brought some evils in its train. It is true there has been no such scandalous living on the part of the Acharyas as in some other movements, but the vice here is one of hoarding wealth and property, which should be well used in the interests of the community and the general public, and in the propagation of the faith.

The fact is the Acharyas have not been always up to the mark. For the first two generations they busied themselves in various ways for the good of the body entrusted to their care, but for the last two decades or so there has been a sort of falling off on their part from the standard set for them, and one man had actually to be deposed for his bad conduct. This in itself showed that the movement was vital, and that it could not tolerate an unworthy man. There have been also quarrels and law-suits between the Acharyas and the community in general, and the result is that the Acharyas, in full conformity with the intention of the Master, are reduced to the position of strictly constitutional monarchs or bishops, and they receive a definite pension for their maintenance. This has saved them from the great and natural temptation of being the personal owners of so much wealth and property, and from what else would be brought in its train. Nevertheless, they are the leaders of the community and can do much for the faith which is entrusted to

their care, if only they would realize to the full their duties and responsibilities as the heads of a Movement with such a rich past and possibilities for the future. In all this the Movement has been no exception to what has happened to every Movement in the world, and it is as much under the necessity of continual watchfulness and effort to keep up its high standards of moral and spiritual life and the missionary zeal of its first days. Rather this is its paramount duty which it owes to its Master and to the world. It must be said, however, that considering all things, this Sampradaya has had a minimum of friction in the course of its history of a century, and that the Acharyas, Sadhus and the Satsangis have all worked together with remarkable good-will for the consolidation and the preservation of the Sampradaya. Under their watchful care and co-operation, the body has grown into a solid, massive and vast structure of spiritual reality, and it is a standing monument to the great genius of Swami Narayana as a religious Teacher, Leader and Organizer.

## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **Relations with Temporal Powers**

The subject of Swami Narayana's attitude towards the various temporal powers, in the midst of which he lived and did his work, has an interest of its own, and as such it deserves discussion in this book. When he began his work the British Power was not even seen on the horizon in Gujrat, and it took years before it came to be recognized as the suzerain power in this Province. As a matter of fact, this happened during only the last years of Swami Narayana's ministry. Because of this he had to do most of his work under conditions, more or less unsettled, if not full of warfare and anarchy. It is all the more creditable to him, therefore, that he was able to achieve so much in such a state of things, and that too without the patronage or support of any important prince or political power. Rather he had to work against tremendous odds, and in the face of opposition from all quarters, religious and secular.

The first serious conflict of this kind in his life was with no less a person than the representative of the Peshwas in Ahmedabad. This was no small thing, because the Peshwas then held the suzerain power over Gujrat, and any opposition from that quarter would spell ruin to a Movement which had just come into existence. Mention has been already made of this in

another part of the work, and so we need not enter into any discussion of it here. This opposition, however, soon came to an end as the British supplanted the Peshwas as the Suzerain power in Gujrat.

As for the British, they seem to have looked upon this Movement with favour almost from the start, or at least after they had some breathing-time. They seem to have accepted this new religious Movement as an ally in the cause of restoring order and peace, and also in the noble cause of social reform. Swami Narayana entertained similar feelings concerning this new power, alien as it was. Indeed, in the course of his wanderings all over India, he must have seen something and heard much more of the rise of this new power in Bengal and in the South. It is very likely that in the world in which he lived and moved during these years, a world unique in its ways and standards for it was composed of men who had renounced the pleasures of the flesh and glories of the world, he learnt to look upon this power with favour because it brought peace and order in its wake. He had known in these years probably enough of this power to foresee that it would be the sovereign power over the whole of India and consequently while waging war with such social abuses as infanticide etc, he used to tell even rulers and princes amongst whom ~~this~~ custom prevailed, that if they did not give up such wicked practices of their own accord, they would have to do it at the bidding of a great power that was soon to come.

Thus even though there was no direct alliance between this new religious movement and the new political power, there seems to have been a mutual regard between them, and a number of references are to be found in the writings of contemporary English officials working in Gujrat at that time to the noble work of Swami Narayana. They all uniformly speak of him with much appreciation and describe his work of religious and social reform as a great achievement. So significant are these references that one may well draw a comparison and contrast between them and those one finds in the New Testament and elsewhere respecting Jesus Christ made by the Romans who were in Palestine in Jesus' time. The British in India were in a position similar to that of the Romans in Palestine, and if we find the British more full of praise and admiration than the Romans were for Jesus, it is due to the fact that Swami Narayana's ministry was of longer duration and consequently had made greater impression upon his times, and also to the fact that Christianity has made a real difference in the mentality of the people of the West, because of which they are more alive to spiritual values than the Romans were.

One of these testimonies is from the pen of Bishop Heber, who came to Gujrat in the year 1825 A. D. and met Swami Narayana. The account which he has given of his talk with the latter and of the impression that was made on him by Swami Narayana is not free from bias due to the missionary-complex which he had in common with others of the same

profession, and it is moreover too long to be reproduced here. However, the very fact that he gives even the minutest detail of this interview shows that in Swami Narayana he was meeting a man of great significance. He prefaces the account with these words:

Some good has been done, Mr. Williamson\* said, among many of these wild people, by the preaching and popularity of the Hindu Reformer Swami Narayana, who had been mentioned to me at Baroda. His morality was said to be far better than any which could be learned from the Shastras (scriptures). He preached a great degree of purity, forbidding his disciples so much as to look on any woman whom they passed. He condemned theft and bloodshed, and those villages and districts, which had received him, from being among the worst were now amongst the best and most orderly in the Provinces. Nor was this all insomuch as he was said to have destroyed the yoke of caste, to have preached one God, and in short to have made considerable approaches to the truth that I could not but hope he might be an appointed instrument to prepare the way for the Gospel.

These words in fact contain the testimony of the English official, and they represent not only his own impression but that of most of the English officials in the Province. As these judged the movement altogether from outside, not knowing the language properly nor having taken pains to study the inner life of the movement, one wonders if there could have been any better testimony than this.

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\*This man was a collector in one of the districts near Ahmedabad.



There is also the testimony of Sir Monier Williams, the well-known Sanskrit scholar and author of books on Hinduism. He came to Gujrat and visited one or two places belonging to this movement, studied its literature and even translated one of its books called *Shiksha-Patri*. Though a Christian, he was humble and devout enough to appreciate other religions. He was, therefore, deeply impressed with what he saw of this Sampradaya more than half a century after Swami Narayana had left this world, and wrote the following in regard to it in his book called "Religious Life and Thought in India":

Swami Narayana himself was a celibate, virtuous, self-controlled, austere, ascetical, yet withal large-hearted and philanthropic and with a great aptitude for learning. . . . . In an honest desire to purify the Vaishnava faith, the sect has done and is doing much good. But there can be no question that, its doctrines, like its gods, its idols and its sectarian mark, are part and parcel of Vaishnavism. . . . . *Shiksha-Patri* is composed by their founder, with the aid of a learned Brahmin called Dinanath, and is a collection of 212 precepts, some original, some extracted from Manu and other sacred Shastras, and many of them containing high moral sentiments worthy of Christianity. . . . The disciples of Swami Narayana number more than 2,00,000 (two hundred thousand) persons; they are broadly divided into two classes, *Sadhus* (holy men) and *Grihasthas* (house-holders). They correspond to clergy and laity; the former who are all celibates are supported by the latter. . . . The holy men are all celibates. They have abandoned all worldly ties, that they may go forth unencumbered to disseminate the doctrines of their founder. They itinerate in pairs, to cheer, to support and keep watch over each other.

They strive to win disciples by personal example and persuasion rather than by controversy. Surely other proselytizing societies might gain some useful hints from a study of their method. . . . I found the Pandit\* well-versed in Sanskrit, and one or two astonished me by the fluency with which they spoke it, and by their readiness in answering difficult questions with which I tested their knowledge.

This great Sanskritist was so impressed by the book *Shiksha-Patri* that he translated it, and while publishing the translation in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Bombay Branch of 1882, wrote as follows in regard to this Sampradaya among other things :

What I saw of their whole system convinced me that the Swami Narayanis are a shrewd, energetic body of men, and their sect an advancing one. . . . Without doubt the tendency of the doctrines inculcated is towards purity of life and conduct. Salvation is to be attained not merely by devotion to the Supreme Being under His names of Narayana, Vishnu and Krishna, but by a faithful discharge of the duties (Dharma) of religion and by control of the passions and purity of conduct.

Eight sacred books are enumerated as inspired authoritative guides, and of these the two especially used are Bhagvat Purana and Bhagvad Gita. The philosophy enjoined is that modified form of the Vedant called "Qualified Non-Duality" Vishistadwaita as taught by the first great Vaishnava leader Ramanuja. *In fact it is clear that with the exception of the substitution of Vishnu or Krishna and his consorts for Brahman, the philosophical doctrines of the sect differ very little from pure Brahmanism. (The italics are ours.)*

\*This Pandit was one of the men on the spot who carried on the conversation with Monier Williams in Sanskrit.

Sir Monier Williams is a good judge, and he is perfectly right when he says that this religious movement is an integral part of Vaishnavism, and as such it "differs very little from pure Brahmanism" or Hinduism. The most important thing to remember about this Sampradaya is that it is entirely indigenous and Hindu in its origin and development, and is not influenced in the least by any alien thought or life. In this it is altogether different from all the modern religious movements such as the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the RamKrishna-Vivekananda Movement etc.

We shall add one or two more testimonies from English sources to show what kind of impression Swami Narayana and his work made on the minds of people, who were not biassed by any religious prejudice, and who, moreover, had better opportunities to judge of his work. The following extracts are taken from an article in "Bow-Bells" No. 677 Vol. XXVII :

Those who become Sadhus receive a name, and are instructed to submit to any ill-usage without resistance or without allowing the slightest resentment to remain on their minds. They are to foreswear all the worldly goods and all concerns of this world. They are not even to possess any article made of metal except a needle to sew their clothes and a knife to mend their pen for writing holy works. They are not to see nor to think of women.

People of all castes and persuasions resort to Swami Narayana, and the number of his followers is very great, estimated by the most intelligent natives at about one hundred thousand. These are principally from Kathiawad and the Western districts of Gujrat.

Swami Narayana himself is a very superior man. He soon acquired great influence over men's mind. The distinguished tenets between his system and that of other Hindus are so inoffensive that they might at least have escaped violent opposition. This does not, however, seem to be the case. All the orders of religious mendicants in particular used to take advantage of the peaceful profession of his disciples by beating them sometimes unmercifully.

As tending to show the Swami desired to practise what he preached, the approach of a multitude of 50,000 people stated to accompany him on a celebrated visit to Ahmedabad for the purpose of consecrating a temple to Nar Narayana, having occasioned some reports that measures of security would be taken which he heard of, he immediately sent a message to express his regret that his coming should occasion any trouble, and that rather than it should do so, he would not prefer coming at all. These reports being, of course, confounded, he came and had obtained permission to occupy the Sahi Bag, a house belonging to Government. But on his arrival, finding that he could not stay there without a risk of his followers injuring the premises, he moved of his own accord to an uncultivated plain at a considerable distance, preferring to submit to all the inconvenience and want of accomodation, to running the risk of the slightest damage being committed by the people resorting to him.

The most intelligent people in the country, even while they regret (as Hindus) the levelling nature of his system, acknowledge their belief that his preaching has produced great effect in improving the morals of people.

The following is culled from an account of Swami Narayana's life and work given in the *Journal of Oriental Research* by James Burges in November 1872 :

One of the most numerous of the modern Hindu sects in Western India is that of "Narayana Swami" in Gujrat and Kathiawad. Since his death his followers have become very numerous throughout Gujrat and Kathiawad. Notwithstanding the vigorous opposition they met with in some places they continued zealously to propagate and practise their religion. "Some of his followers," says the priest quoted above, "were denied admission to the towns, some were buried alive, some Sadhus were even put to death." In Surat an attempt was made some twenty five years ago to procure their expulsion from several castes, but without success. The followers of Swami Narayana are chiefly of the lower castes. But there are many also of the very highest.

It is said that Gaekwad Sayajee\* became a disciple, and also the Raja of Gadhada. It is thought that about one fourth of the Hindu population of Surat are followers of Swami Narayana.

After the death of Swami Narayana his disciples created Chauras or stopping places, and monuments to his memory in all the villages and beneath all the trees where he had at any time made any stay. There they worship him.

At the death of Swami Narayana there were about 5,00,000 heads of families holding his tenets and about 500 Sadhu ascetics.

Two reasons may be assigned for the spread of this sect: first, and perhaps chiefly, strict prohibition of the taking of animal life, which completely falls in with the prejudices of the Hindu community. True there are many castes who eat flesh, but this is always considered

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\* This was the foremost Prince in Gujrat at that time, and the Gaekwad family is still the chief princely family in the Province.

rather in the light of a tolerated sin than a lawful practice: and abstinence is considered meritorious. Among the Bhils, Kolis etc., this is the chief difference between the followers of Sahajananda and other Hindus. Again, Sahajananda promises to take away sins. He is regarded by his disciples as the surety of sinners. In Kathiawad and Gujrat, when Christianity is preached, the hearers frequently remark that that is very similar to their own faith respecting Swami Narayana.

In regard to the first reason assigned here for the spread of the movement, the effect is confounded with the cause. The practice of Ahimsa i. e. non-violence, not only in regard to animals but in the attitude of life in general among the disciples of Swami Narayana, and especially in the lower castes, became possible because of the great personal power of their Master. It was this which changed the life of thousands from among all classes of people, and made sinners into saints. Many religious movements preached Ahimsa in the past, but they hardly touched those classes among whom Swami Narayana had such success. It must also be remembered that he drew his disciples equally from all classes of people, and this is one of the great beauties of this Sampradaya. The impression that gained ground in his time and even after that the followers of the Fellowship came chiefly from the lower classes is due to the fact that most of the religious movements of his time were confined to certain sections of the people, and when people saw that this Fellowship had a much larger number of followers from the lower castes than other bodies, they naturally thought that the movement was more or less confined to them.

It was the unique personality of Swami Narayana that was responsible for this signal success among the lowest as well as the highest. In that personality there was deep love for all, a love which embraced sinners as well as saints, high as well as low, literate and illiterate, and it wanted to save them all; nay, this love extended even to animals and all life. It was this love which drew to him so many people, and they in their turn were infected by the same, with the result that the movement went on propagating itself.

It is interesting to note that one of the last public acts of Swami Narayana was one of gracious courtsey to the chief representative of the British Government in the Province. Sir Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay, visited Kathiawad in 1830 A. D., and having heard much of the great teacher, was very eager to see him. Accordingly a letter was sent to him by the Political Agent in Kathiawad requesting him to come to Rajkot, the Headquarters of the Agency, if he could. To this Swami Narayana replied expressing his regret that he was not able to come owing to his failing health. The Political Agent replied to this saying that the Governor and he himself were much concerned to hear of the illness of Swami Narayana, and that the Governor was much disappointed at not being able to see him. Upon the receipt of this letter, Swami Narayana proceeded to Rajkot with a few disciples, and on his way he received another letter from the Secretary of the Governor expressing the disappointment of the latter for his not being able to see him, and his

concern for his health. Soon after Swami Narayana was in Rajkot where he met the Governor. His visit has been thus described by the office of the Political Agent:

On the receipt of the above two letters, Swami Narayana Maharaj proceeded to Rajkot to visit the Right Honourable the Governor Sir Malcolm, and on the 20th February, 1830, was escorted as a mark of honourable reception by a party of troops and military foot soldiers to the Political Agent's bungalow, where His Excellency the Governor, his Secretary Mr. Thompson Williamson, six other European gentlemen and the Political Agent Mr. Blane, came out of the bungalow to meet Swami Narayana and His Excellency conducted the Swami hand in hand to a hall and made him sit on a chair. His Excellency afterwards with pleasure enquired about the principles of his religion, which were communicated accordingly. His Excellency also made a present to Swami Narayana of a pair of shawls and other piece-goods. He, then, was asked by the Governor whether he and his disciples had any harm under the British rule; and his Excellency was informed in reply that there was nothing of the sort, but that, on the contrary, every protection was given them by all the officers in authority. His Excellency then asked for a code of religion of Swami Narayana, and the book called the Shiksha-patri was presented accordingly. Thus after a visit extending to an hour Swami Narayana asked permission to depart, when he was sent back with the same honours with which he was received, all the European officers accompanying him out of the door from the bungalow. Having stopped at the place in Rajkot where the Swami had put up, he proceeded to Gadhada. There was a long conversation between the Governor and Swami Narayana during the above visit. The above is a short report of it.



The fact is worth noting that these letters from the Political Agent and the Secretary of the Governor were addressed to " the most respectable and wise Swami Narayana Sahajananda ", which shows that even in his own life-time the term " Narayana ", under which name he wanted his followers to worship God, was coupled with his name Sahajananda. This leaves no doubt that very soon after his passing away, he came to be called Swami Narayana, and this is the only instance in the entire history of mankind where a religious Teacher has been not only identified with the Deity, but called by the very name of God which he taught his disciples as the highest of all names.

Swami Narayana's relations with Hindu Princes deserve some notice. The most important among these was His Highness Sayajee Rao the Gaekwar of Baroda. At first he does not seem to have been very favourable to the new movement, but in course of time he began to appreciate it more and more, and became a friend, if not a disciple thereof. It was in all probability in connection with this Prince that Swami Narayana was asked by some of his disciples to show his power by working some miracle, a request to which he made the following characteristic reply:

It is not easy for us to be in harmony with big people of this world such as Princes etc. These have pride of their wealth or power, while we have that of our renunciation and indifference to the things of this world. If a Prince is pleased he might give some land or estate, things for which we care little, and on our part we are desirous to make people worship God and to have fellowship with

His saints, things for which such people care little. Because of this, people who are big in the world and ourselves cannot be happy with one another.

This was his attitude towards people in temporal power, and Swami Narayana never courted their favour. At the same time he never showed that indifference towards them which is born of a sense of false independence. He was fully aware of the fact that these people had souls, and he was as anxious to save them as he was to save those who were poor. It is true he never courted these for this purpose as he did the poor, but if they showed any inclination to hear and accept his teaching, he was always at their service as in the case of the others. He had many disciples among the rich and the noble, and there were a few such among princes and princesses. The Rani of Dharampur State is said to have been one of his disciples, and several Kathi chiefs were his close followers. On the other hand he was too big a man to be actuated by any motive of antagonism towards them, and even when some of them persecuted him he gladly forgave and blessed them in return. He commanded his disciples again and again to do the same. The principle that he followed in regard to men in authority was the same as has been followed by all the great religious teachers of the world, viz., that such people deserve respect of all, and as such they should receive it. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that belong to God." This was true of him as of Christ Jesus, and he realized it by the light of his own genius.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Return Home

By the time Swami Narayana was about fifty, his work on this earth was finished in the truest sense. For thirty years he had been at the head of the Movement which he had now turned into a full-fledged Sampradaya of a very high order. He had succeeded in carrying through a large programme of thorough-going religious and moral reform in an entire Province. He could count his disciples by tens of thousands in number at the end of his ministry. When we remember that he did all this in the face of much opposition and persecution, and without any support or help from any temporal power, we shall be in a position to realize to some extent the extraordinary nature and amount of his work. This was not all. He had given all this work a well-rounded shape and form so that there were no loose ends left. This looked almost as if it were in anticipation of his "departure for home" to use the language of the Sampradaya.

He fell ill about the beginning of the year 1886 of the Samvat era, and it was in spite of this that he went\* to see Sir Malcolm at Rajkot at the express

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\*To accept an invitation was a part of his duty as a Sadhu. He did this in the case of even the humblest. During his last days, he had a call from one of his disciples, an old man on the point of death, and Swami Narayana went to see him in his village which was some miles off. He did this although he did not go that year to Vartal to celebrate the Spring Festival.

request of the latter. He became worse after his return to Gadhadra, and both he and those who attended him felt that the end was approaching. As soon as the news of the illness spread, troops of disciples, Sadhus as well as laymen, came from all sides to bid farewell to their Master. Swami Narayana himself consoled them all in their sorrow and heaviness of heart, and asked them to follow their respective duties and leave for their homes as the little place was becoming too full of people. This they all were very loath to do. Indeed, so great was the sorrow of some of these disciples at the impending departure of their beloved and revered Master, that the latter had to command repeatedly that none should commit suicide because of his leaving them. Perhaps nothing shows so much the marvellous love his disciples bore him as this express command on his part, and one wonders if there is anything similar to it in the life-story of any other religious teacher.

After a few weeks of serious illness there seemed to be a partial recovery which, according to some, was feigned on his part as he wanted to send away most of the disciples who had come from far and near. Accordingly he began to improve slowly for some days, and on the last day but one he got up and partook of some nourishment. So great was the rejoicing of all at this that Dada Khachar at whose house he was staying distributed sugar\* among the people. Swami Narayana sent away all his disciples on that very day,

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\*This is an usual practice with the Hindus on all occasions considered auspicious.

keeping with him only those few whom he wanted to be with him until the last moment.

One of those who came to see him from Junagadh at his express command was Swami Gunatitananda, who gives an account of what happened during these last days. Although the account has special reference to himself, we give it here :

When in the year Samvat 1886 the Maharaj fell ill in order to leave for home, he asked me to go to Junagadh to take charge of the Mandir there. I knew that the Maharaj would no more remain in flesh, and so while taking leave my heart was filled with sorrow, and tears began to flow from my eyes. Seeing this, the Maharaj said that he would call me when he was about to leave. I then came to Junagadh, and after some days the Maharaj asked Swami Brahmananda to go to Junagadh and send me back at once. I left for Gadhada at once, and reached on the morning of the sixth day. At that time the Maharaj's condition was worse, and none was allowed to go to him. However, Somla Khachar said to the Maharaj that I had come and I was called in. I prostrated myself before the Maharaj, and took my seat. The Maharaj had been lying down when I went in, but he now sat up and looked at me for sometime. Then he asked me: "Are you alright? Are all the Images in the temple at Junagadh happy? Have they all dresses and ornaments?" I replied: "Yes, Maharaj, we all are happy by your grace. Only Siddheswar has no crown." Then the Maharaj asked Brahmchari to bring one crown, and when it was brought, the Maharaj himself gave it to me, saying, "Here is the crown for Siddheswar."

Then on the tenth day the Maharaj left this world for home, and we took his body to Laxmiwadi. At that time all were filled with sorrow, and they began to weep

and cry. Gopal Swami then told me, "All these people think of their father (the Maharaj) as dead, but we do not think so, and so let us do all the needful." Then I took Raghuvirjee\* Maharaj and we both did what was necessary.

Then I went out for a few minutes and seeing green grass on the banks of a little canal, I said to myself: "This grass has vital connection with water and so it lives and is green, but now that the Maharaj has gone, what will happen to us?" With this thought in my mind I fell down and became unconscious when the Maharaj himself came and taking hold of me raised me up, and embracing me said, "I am not gone: I abide in you all the time." Saying this he disappeared.

There are a few stories told of his reappearance to various disciples of his, after he had passed away, a couple of which we shall give here to show the nature of these and the atmosphere which Swami Narayana had created. One of these appearances is said to have taken place while the cremation of the body was going on, and it is thus described:

At that time Dada Khachar was extremely sorrowful, seeing which Gopalananda Swami said to him: "Why are you so sad? Please go from here to the terrace on the other side." Accordingly Dada Khachar went there when lo! he saw the Maharaj seated there with many garlands of flowers round his neck. At this Dada Khachar bowed to him and said, "Ah, Maharaj, you are seated here!" Then the Maharaj said: "Dada Khachar, you have lived with me so many years, and still you have not known my glory properly. You look within." Dada Khachar did this and

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\*This was a nephew of Swami Narayana, and he was one of the new Acharyas.

saw the radiant figure of the Maharaj surrounded by light, and when he looked outside he saw the Maharaj there also. Then the Maharaj gave him a garland of flowers and said, "Follow Gopalananda Swami in everything, for I abide in him ever and do what he bids you do." Saying this the Maharaj disappeared and Dada Khachar came smiling to Gopalananda Swami and told him all this whereupon the Swami said : " There is neither birth nor death for the Maharaj. He has taken human form just like the one he has in heavens, and yet he is divine in every way. Know that this is one of his manifold dealings and keep the garland he has given you carefully and worship it. "

Here is another story :

On that very day two Brahmins of Vadnagar, who were travelling about in Kathiawad for collecting alms, were on their way home, and hoping to see the Maharaj in Gadhada, as they were coming to the place, they saw on the way the Maharaj with his usual company of Kathi horsemen. The Brahmins threw off their knapsacks from their shoulders, and prostrating themselves again and again before the Maharaj said, " We are going to Gadhada to pay our respects to you. " Then the Maharaj said: " You go there and we shall just follow you. " Accordingly they came to Gadhada, and when they were near the garden where the cremation was going on, they learned on inquiry what had happened, and they wondered exceedingly in their mind. Then they resolved no more to go back to the world, and became Brahmcharis. Their names were Harikrishnananda and Ramchandrananda, and they remained in Ahmedabad, serving Maharaj Harikrishna.

The following might well be added here :

The physician Ramchandra was coming to Gadhada with a company of men from Baroda, and he was not far from Gadhada on this very day when the company saw the

Maharaj together with ten of his usual Kathi attendants including Dada Khachar. After the usual salutations were over, the Maharaj asked Ramchandra where they were going, to which he replied that they were going to see him on hearing of his illness. The Maharaj then asked him to feel his pulse which the latter did and found him alright. Then the Maharaj said to him : "You go to Gadhada and we shall be there to-morrow." When this company reached Gadhada in the evening, they learned what had happened, and they also knew that the Maharaj had worked a miracle for them.

There is another story which might be added :

There were two women from Dholera named Ajuba and Fuliba who were coming to Gadhada to see the Maharaj, and on the evening of this very day when they were resting for a time on their way, the Maharaj came with his company of ten followers, and asked them to go to Gadhada where he would follow them soon. They reached the place late in the evening and learning of the passing away of the Maharaj wondered at the miracle.

Here is one more :

Narsinha Mehta of Piplana who was a well-known disciple of the Maharaj had a daughter named Ladubai who was married in Akha. On this very day the Maharaj went to her place with his company, and asked her to prepare food for them all. While doing this she told him that she had gone to Gadhada a fortnight ago, and was about to go again as she had heard of his serious condition. To this he replied that he was now alright and was going on his usual round to make his disciples happy. Then they all took their meal and suddenly disappeared when she realized that the Maharaj had performed a miracle for her.

Many were the appearances of the Maharaj on this day to his disciples, especially to those who were



on their way to Gadhada to inquire after his health and to have his darshan for the last time.

This "return home" took place on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Jyesth of 1886 of the Samvat era corresponding with the 28th of June 1830 A. D. and its effect upon the community has been thus described by an Englishman:

As the announcement of his death was winged, one wail, loud and piercing and bitter, rang throughout Gujrat upon the signal calamity befallen upon the community.

We need to add one more account in this chapter and that is the story of the passing away of Swami Muktananda. As has been said before several times, he was one of the oldest members of this Holy Fellowship, and he had mothered the body including even Swami Narayana in those days when he came first to the Fellowship. For him his Master's loss was too much to bear. He was old and infirm, and had been harassed for years by what was in all probability tuberculosis of lungs. In spite of this he had worked almost to the last moment of his life exerting himself to his utmost in everything that he did. In addition to his manifold motherly labours of looking after the welfare of the entire body, he had taken upon himself to do a certain amount of literary work every day in the shape of composing hymns etc, and he gave up this work only at the express command of Swami Gopalananda who was made the head of the entire Fellowship by the Master just before he passed away. Very soon after the Master was gone, Swami Mukta-

nanda fell seriously ill and he wanted to be with his Master. He had seen the tender plant which he cherished with such fostering care under the leadership of his late Master Swami Ramananda grow into a mighty tree which had now spread its branches far and wide, and which gave shelter to large numbers of people. He had seen glory upon glory far beyond his expectations, and if any man could sing the Nunc Dimittis with full justification it was he. In this great work he had a share as none else except the Master, and now that the work of both was done he felt a call to follow his Master. He grew weaker day by day, and left this world for Akshardhama exactly a month after the Master had preceded him there. On the last day he went to the temple in Gadhada, and offered worship to the image Gopinathjee which was a replica of the person of Swami Narayana. He prayed for being taken home, and at noon he called Acharya Raghuvirji who had stayed on to look after Swami Muktananda, gave him counsel for the proper conduct of the Fellowship, and then being in communion with the Master gave up his body.

## **CHAPTER XIX**

### **Victory over Death**

A most remarkable feature of this Movement is its positive assurance of victory over death and a very vital experience on the part of its followers at the time of death of being taken to Heaven by their Master. One meets this at every turn in their Literature and Tradition, and almost every family of the Fellowship knows of such remarkable experience on the part of some of its members at the time of their passing away, and these are some of the deepest things the family has known in its history. This is something unique, and the present writer knows nothing like it in any other religious movement of the world. Death has neither terrors nor sting for the members of this Satsang, for it is nothing but an entrance to the Heaven of Heavens. They rarely use the term "Death" and they describe it by saying that their Lord Swami Narayana took away such and such a person to his own abode. This is not a matter of theory or belief or faith, but one of a very realistic vision on the part of the person dying and often even of others. There are hundreds of such cases mentioned in the Literature with the names of the persons thus testifying at the time of their death. There are cases where a member of a family, the only believer therein, thus dying has been the means of converting the entire family. There are others where because of

such visions some of the people in a village or a town have been converted.

The most remarkable thing about these visions is that they were prevalent even when Swami Narayana himself was living. The earliest account of these that we find in their Literature is in a book written only two or three years after he assumed the leadership of the Movement, a book called Yama-Danda (The Judgement) by Swami Nishkulananda, wherein the astounding claim is made on behalf of this Teacher that he comes in person to take his disciples when they die to his eternal abode which is the Highest of Heavens. This was the belief held by the believers all through the period that the Master was in flesh, and the true believers were assured in their mind, and some of them even testified to the fact, that their Master himself in person had come to take them at the time of their passing away. The same belief has been held all this time, and the visions are still seen although a century has passed since.

What is still more remarkable is that it is not the Master alone who is thus seen. Sometimes he comes with one or two of his principal disciples or a company of Sadhus, and at times he is seen with his party of Kathi horsemen. At such times once in a while even the village people or the neighbours see him, but most often it is the dying person who sees him and speaks about the matter to his or her attendants. Whatever it be, this is a most marvellous phenomenon of religious life, and the very fact that

such a belief should have been persisted in for over a century, and that hundreds of stories should be told of visions of this kind with the names of persons and places where they lived etc., is unique in religious history, and this, together with all the great things done by this Movement, testifies in an unmistakable manner to its wonderful character. We shall record here some very characteristic stories of such visions in order to give an idea of the kind of belief that the members of this Satsang have held in the past and do still hold. Some of these are like cross-sections of the entire Movement, and give us a peep into the whole of it. Here is one such:

There lived in the village Golida the father of Rana Rajgar who went from Jagannath to Dwarka bowing down at full length all the way\*, and then came home. To him Ramananda Swami on going to his village said, "You will not be saved by doing such things: salvation is only possible when you know the Incarnate One." He replied, "How is it possible to do this in this sinful age?" The Swami said in reply to this: "You do not believe what I say, but your son who is my devotee will save you." Then his son Rana came to know the Maharaj and accepted the faith before him at Sardhar. Then Raghav and Vashram, two brothers of Rana, thought of renouncing the world, and so they requested their mother to give them permission to be Sadhus. This she refused and so Rana said to her: "You let them be Sadhus and I shall take care of you." She did this and both went to Gadhada and were ordained by the Maharaj, who gave them the names of Raghavananda and Vishwatmananda respectively. Then Rana fell ill and was about to leave his body when his mother said, "Rana, you

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\*This is a distance of about 1500 miles.

were saying that you would take care of me, and now you are leaving this world." To this he replied, "Mother, I shall come to take you on the twelfth day to the mansion. On that day tell the people who will have assembled for the meal\* after they have finished eating: "I shall leave my body at midnight when Rana my son will come to take me: therefore consider this meal given on my behalf as well as that of Rana." Now I shall leave this body of mine at midnight." Then Rana called his fellow-believers and relations at that time, and after bidding them good-bye passed on to the mansion. On the twelfth day when his caste people had gathered together for dinner, the mother said, "I am going to the mansion this midnight when Rana and the Maharaj will come to take me." Hearing this some began to scoff at her saying she had gone mad, but as the night advanced all her fellow-believers and relations came to her, and at the stroke of twelve Rana came with the Maharaj in a Viman,† and the old woman said, "See, here are the Maharaj and Rana come to fetch me, and I am going with them to the Master's mansion." Saying this she gave up her body and went with the Maharaj. Many people wondered at the manifestation of this glory and became Satsangis.

Here is another equally remarkable :

Once in Sanala, Hirjee, an uncle of Muljee, passed away, and on the third day when Muljee was cleaning his teeth while sitting on a corner of his verandah, he saw the Maharaj in a vision, and his spirit became united with him and he went to the Aksharadham where he saw the Maharaj

\*Among the Hindus it is a custom to give a kind of commemoration dinner on a day usually in the second week after a person's death.

†This is a kind of heavenly chariot.

seated on a heavenly throne surrounded by millions of saved spirits. Then the Maharaj said to Muljee: "You go back to your body and bring people in the Fellowship. We shall come to take you at mid-day on the eighth day from now, and speak of this to the people." Muljee then came back to his body, and on his becoming conscious his brother asked him what had happened to him. He then told him what he had seen. At noon after his meal he went to the public hall\* of the village, and calling all the people told them about the blessedness of the Aksharadham, and also of the other mansions†: talked to them of the Scriptures and their meaning, and then added that he would leave on the eighth day for Aksharadham which was the abode of the Maharaj. Hearing this all the people wondered and many of them including the chief of the place said, "If you go to Heaven on the eighth day, we all shall be Satsangis, and shall put on the Kanthi of Swami Narayana." To this Muljee said, "Be sure that the Maharaj will come to take me on the eighth day." On that day there was a dinner on account of the death of his uncle, and so he called all the guests in the morning and said to them: "I shall leave this body at noon and so you finish your meal before that time." They made all arrangements accordingly and after finishing everything at about eleven o'clock, they all came to Muljee and so did the chief and many other people of the place. Muljee made them repeat the name of Swami Narayana for some time and then bade them stop. He turned to his relations and said: "Do not mourn on my account and distribute sugar after I am gone, for would you not rejoice if I received the chieftainship of this place?" They replied,

\*In India every village has a kind of public meeting place where people come together almost every day.

†These are different kinds of heaven, the highest of which is the Aksharadham.

"Surely." Then he asked again, "Would you not rejoice still more if I received the kingdom of Baroda?" They replied to this that they would. Then he said again: "But now I am going to Aksharadham which means millions of kingdoms like Baroda." While talking in this way, when it was about twelve, Muljee said, "Glory be to Swami Narayana." Then he turned to all assembled there, and said, "Here are Swami Narayana and Gopalananda and many others come to take me, and I am going with them to the Mansion." With these words he left his body. At this time many people saw the Maharaj and also the other Sadhus and they wondered. Then the Chief of the place and many others\* became Satsangis.

Here is another:

In the town of Rajkot a mason called Mandanbhai was ill and he was very old. He had seen the Maharaj and followed the principles of the Sampradaya well. He saw† the Maharaj in his illness, and the Maharaj said to him, "Mandanbhai, come with us to the Mansion." Hearing him talk with some one, his daughter said, "Papa, with whom are you talking?" He said that the Maharaj had come to fetch him, whereupon she said: "Kalabhai has gone to Vadia today and he will come tomorrow." Then Mandanbhai said to the Maharaj, "Please come to take me tomorrow." The Maharaj replied: "Very well, we shall come tomorrow at four o'clock," and disappeared. Then they sent a telegram to Kalabhai at Vadia, and all the believers in the town came to know that Mandanbhai was going to the Mansion. At this they all came to see him and sang praises of God with cymbals etc. Next day Kalabhai came at noon and on

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\*In the original many names are given.

†This was a spiritual vision.



seeing so many Harijans\* said to his father, " Papa, why have you gathered so many people ? " To this he replied: " Today at four the Maharaj will come to take me and so they have come to see me. " Then Kalabhai said, " God works in His own way and so if He does not come people will think ill of us. " Mandanbhai replied to this: " The Maharaj is sure to come, so you and your brother-in-law who has come with you should finish your meal. " This they did, and when they came again to Mandanbhai, he asked them to give him a bath. To this they replied that it was not proper for him to bathe as he had fever, but he persisted and so they gave him a bath, and he put on a clean cloth. Then he asked the people to sing the praises of God which they did: and when it was four o'clock he said, " Here comes the Maharaj, and with him are his chief saints and I am going with them. " Saying this he gave up his body.

Here is another :

In the Samvat year 1916 in the village of Modasa Soni ( Goldsmith ) Ajabhai fell ill, and when he was about to leave his body, the Maharaj came in his chariot to take him, and the sound† of this was heard by some people who were sitting at the gate of Jadeja Virajee. It was late in the evening and so they wondered as to whose chariot this could be. Then Jadeja Virajee said: " Ajo Soni is ill and it is quite likely that the Maharaj may have come to take him. " While he was saying this they heard the cry announcing Ajabhai's passing away. At this the people who were

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\*This word is used by this Fellowship for its followers of all castes. It means ' people of God. ' This is a term common among the Vaishnavas, and it is from them that Mahatma Gandhi has taken it.

†A chariot makes a peculiar sound which it is easy to distinguish. Usually this kind of vehicle is used only on such occasions as marriage etc.

seated there said: " The religion of Swami Narayana is true, and such things do not happen anywhere else " At that very moment a sister of Ajabhai called Ratanbai was in Jamnagar where she also saw the Maharaj, and she knew that her brother was taken by the Maharaj to his Mansion. She said this to the people in the morning, and they all got the news of Ajabhai's passing away from his home the next day. It is in this way that the Maharaj, while giving signs, takes his devotees to his Mansion.

Here we have another :

In the town of Lunawada there was a man called Lakha Joshi who ministered unto Swami Sukhdatanandjee in his serious illness so devotedly that the Swami was very pleased with him, and he asked him to demand some blessing from him. At this Lakha Joshi said, " Swami, take me to the Mansion when you go there. " To this the Swami replied: " Ask for something else. " The man said : " I do not want anything else. " The Swami then said, " Alright. " The Swami, however, recovered from his illness, but later on while he was in Vartal he fell ill again and passed away. The news of this was brought to Lakha Joshi when he said to the Harijans in the Mandir: " Sukhdatananda Swami has promised me and so he will take me to the Mansion. " Then Purshottama and other Harijans said: " That will be when you pass away in your time. " At midnight, however, Lakha Joshi had a headache which developed into fever the next day, and that night when he was about to leave his body, he said, " Here are Sukhdatananda Swami and the Maharaj, and I am going with them to the Mansion. " In this way the Maharaj took Lakha Joshi to his Mansion, fulfilling thus the promise given by Sukhdatananda Swami to him.

We might make room for this also :

In the town of Nagadka Natha Khachar and Manasia Khachar, while sitting in the mandir, promised each other

that when one of them passed away, he would come soon to take the other in company with the Maharaj. Later on when Natha Khachar fell ill, Manasia came to him and said, "You are now about to leave for the Mansion, and I wonder if you will keep your promise." To this Natha Khachar replied : "The Maharaj will fulfill my promise to you." Then Manasia went home and had fever, and after sometime his daughter told him : "Natha Khachar has gone to the Mansion." Then Manasia said, "Is Natha Khachar gone?" The reply was "yes." On hearing this he said, "Now I am going," and with these words he passed on. Then both of them were cremated on the same pyre. In this way the Maharaj fulfilled their promise and took them to his Mansion.

Here is one more :

In the town of Kharol there was a farmer called Manor who was a real believer. He used to sow the seed of gourd in order to get big gourds\* for the use of the Sadhus. He fell seriously ill and the Maharaj came to take him in the forenoon. At that time there were with him about fifty or sixty Sadhus, all of whom had new gourds in their hands, and they passed through the town so that the people of the place saw them and said, "Where do these Sadhus of Swami Narayana with these new gourds go?" Many even followed them, and the Maharaj and the Sadhus entered the room of Manor Bhakta and this was seen by all. Then Manor Bhakta left his body, and the Maharaj took him to his Mansion.

Another :

Once the Maharaj was going from Vartal to the village of Gol when he met some boys of the Koli caste. Now one of these boys had buried two melons in the earth in order

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\*These Sadhus do not keep metal pots, and so they use a kind of jug made from a big gourd. This is a practice followed in India for ages.

to preserve them with the idea that he would give one to Swami Narayana and the other to his uncle. As soon as the Maharaj saw the boy, he said to him, "Bring the melon that you have kept for me: the other one which you have preserved for your uncle has been unearthed and eaten by a fox." The boy did this and the Maharaj ate it. Now after some time that boy was about to leave his body when the Maharaj came with a melon in his hand to take him, and the boy said, "Here is the Maharaj with a melon in his hand come to take me, and I am going with him to the Mansion." With these words he left the body and went with the Maharaj.

Any number of such visions can be related here, but these are enough. They show what a wonderful kind of Supernaturalism it is with which this Sampradaya is pervaded through and through. That such things can be believed in and passed on from generation to generation in the family and in the community is the great wonder, and there is nothing like it in any other religious movement. It is altogether original to this Fellowship and as such unique. It is the major miracle of the movement, or rather a series which started with the beginning of the ministry of Swami Narayana, continued all through his life on earth, and which is still going on although a full century has passed by. When the present writer spoke of this to a religious leader in America, he said that there was no such thing known outside the pages of the New Testament. One might go even further and say that even there this kind of phenomenon is absent. St. Paul speaks of the believers who die as "those who

sleep in the Lord." The very belief that the Christians must wait in their graves for the resurrection until the second coming of the Lord Christ made such a phenomenon impossible. Before writing these last few sentences the present writer wanted to make sure whether there was anything like such visions in the lives of the great Christian Saints, and he looked up for this purpose the Life of St. Francis of Assissi by Paul Sabatier and that of Saint Theresa of Lisieux by the Rev. Thomas N. Taylor, two of the noblest Roman Catholic Saints, and was disappointed to find nothing of the kind. Nor does he know of such phenomena being reported in connection with any other religious Teacher in India. It is things like these together with the remarkable quality of saintliness-holiness and love - which Swami Narayana impressed upon his movement, that have made his followers look upon him as even greater than Rama and Krishna, a position which very few among the religious communities in India have ever dared to give to their leaders, however much they may venerate them. Whatever it be, taken all in all, in Swami Narayana we have a religious Teacher and Leader of supreme significance.

We shall give here a list of some of the things that Swami Narayana is said to have done as it is given in one of the books, and though it is by no means exhaustive or systematically arranged, it is enough to give us a peep into his character, life and work, and also into the atmosphere and character

of the Movement. He is believed by his followers to have done all these things and many more:

Due to the glory of Shrijee Maharaj Sachchidananda Swami and many other Sadhus, many laymen such as Govardhan Bhai and many women became perfect in Samadhi: and Shrijee Maharaj gave to many Bhaktas such as Sant-dasjee, Sachchidananda Swami, Vyapacananda Swami, Ram-dasbhai, Parvatbhai, Dosabhai, Jivubai, Sadabai etc, powers to see what was happening miles away, and to go about without any hindrance from matter. He also gave to many Bhaktas such as Mukunda Brahmachari, Manchabhai etc. absolute control over concupiscence.

Shrijee Maharaj made many men and women altogether free from such sins and passions as Lust, Covetousness, Pride, Anger, Selfishness etc, and made them Brahma-like, and he comes to take every one of his followers at the time of his or her passing away with his chariot or viman or elephant or horse.

Shrijee Maharaj helps his followers in many ways in times of trouble and saves them from calamities due to fire, water, etc.

Whosoever felt well-disposed towards his Sadhus, and whosoever served him and them with food or water or fruit or flowers or grass or fuel or with anything, and whosoever welcomed or helped or protected or proved themselves useful in some way, or served him or them with love and respect, or came in touch with them in any way with love, all these have been saved by Shrijee Maharaj.

Shrijee Maharaj has also saved whatever animals such as cows, oxen, buffaloes, horses, elephants, deer etc., and whatever birds have proved themselves useful to him or to the Sadhus in any way. He has also saved such trees as gave him or them shade, or as gave them fruit or flowers

or leaves etc. In this way he has saved both movable and immovable souls.

Due to the glory of Shrijee Maharaj, some Sadhus, laymen and laywomen used to give Samadhi to others and bring them back to ordinary consciousness at will.

Due to the glory of Shrijee Maharaj even a stick or a flower or a piece of cloth\* could put one into Samadhi.

Even birds such as doves, sparrows etc, and animals such as monkeys were put into trance by the mere sight of Shrijee Maharaj.

Many people used to be put into Samadhi by Shrijee Maharaj at the same time, and they were sent in this condition leaving their bodies behind to various Mansions.

At the time of the Conventions, Shrijee Maharaj used to sit on a cushioned seat on a raised dais, and seeing him in this condition, many Sadhus, laymen and laywomen used to have Samadhi, and their spirits would go to different mansions where they would see Shrijee Maharaj in different wonderful and celestial forms. On their return to their bodies they used to describe what they thus saw.

Many Sadhus, laymen and laywomen, used to have Samadhi. Some of them were able to do this for themselves, but there were others who were so powerful as to put others into Samadhi and bring them back.

Some Sadhus who had been adepts in this Samadhi used to go to the assemblies of Shiva, Brahma etc, and tell them of the Incarnate glory of Shrijee Maharaj, and hearing this those gods would come to offer their worship to Shrijee Maharaj.

The Lords of these different Mansions and the spirits residing there, and the different Avatars, they all would come to offer worship to Shrijee Maharaj, and this was

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\*Swami Narayana is said to have endued some of these things with power to do this.

seen by some of the Sadhus who were endowed with spiritual sight. Such is the supernatural glory of Shrijee Maharaj.

Shrijee Maharaj showed to some of his disciples how he absorbed into himself and into some of his Bhaktas even all the Incarnations, and manifested in himself various characteristics of these. Even the very mention of his name was enough to make these Bhaktas assume many forms at the same time, a thing which they were not able to do by taking the name of other Incarnations.

It is said in the scriptures that one can have Samadhi only when one perfects himself in the eight-fold Yoga, but Shrijee Maharaj went to places like Mangrol, Agatrai, Kalwani, Ahmedabad etc, and there the mere sight of him was enough to give many people Samadhi. This happened in the case of Bhaktas as well as non-Bhaktas, to those who were spiritually-minded as well as to those who were evil-minded.

Non-Hindus, Jains etc., came to Shrijee Maharaj and said to him, "If you show us our own Prophets and Lords, we shall believe you to be God." Then Shrijee Maharaj put them into Samadhi and manifested unto them himself as the Prophet and Lord of each of them. He did the same with the followers of Rama and Krishna.

In this and many other ways Shrijee Maharaj performed many wonderful miracles, and their number is so large that they cannot be related. Therefore knowing all this supernatural glory and knowing him to be the One Incarnate in all incarnations, the Supreme, the Cause of all and the Giver of blessedness to all, one must surrender himself completely to him, and knowing oneself as the Brahma, should worship Shrijee Maharaj as the Para-Brahma.





## APPENDIX

### Shiksha Patri

(Epistle of Precepts)

I meditate in my heart on Shri Krishna, the enjoyer of Vrandavana, on whose left side is seated Radha, and on whose breast reclineth Shri (Laxmi) the goddess of wealth and prosperity). 1

I, Sahajananda Swami, write this Shiksha Patri from Vrittlaya to all my followers scattered through different parts of the country. 2

Ayodhyaprasad and Raghuvir, the sons of my two brothers Ram Pratap and Ichcharam, whose father was Dharma; those Naishtik Brahmacharis (the Brahmins who continue to be celibate all their life) the chief among whom is Mukundananda; and those Grihasthas (householders) such as Mayaram Bhatt and others that are my followers; and those women, wives and widows, who have become my disciples, and all those that are Sadhus, such as Muktananda and others; let all these accept my benedictions, true to the Scriptures and with the remembrance of Narayana, the blessings which will protect their faith. 3-6

Let all bear in mind the contents of this Shiksha Patri with a fixed state of mind as they are important and productive of good to all living beings. 7

Those persons who conform to the good usages, enjoined by the true Scriptures, are always the most blessed, both in this world and in the next. 8

But those evil-minded persons, who wantonly transgress, such will certainly suffer great distress in this world as well as the next. 9

Therefore let all of you, who are my disciples, always behave with care and affection, in accordance with this Siksha Patri. 10

No follower of mine shall ever knowingly kill any creature whatever; not even a louse, bug or the most minute insect. My disciples shall never kill any animal, such as a goat etc. for the purpose of offering a sacrifice to the gods and the Pitris (the spirits of the ancestors who have left this world), for it is declared that Ahimsa (Non-Violence) is the highest of all religious duties. Let no human being be ever killed anyway, at any place, for any object, whether it be to obtain a women, or wealth, or political power. 11-13

Let none ever commit suicide whether through rage, or (out of a mistaken religious belief) in any place of pilgrimage; nor shall anyone have recourse to suicide by means of poison or hanging in consequence of the commission of some sinful act. 14

Flesh and meat shall never be taken, even though it be the remains of a sacrifice, nor liquor of any kind be ever drunk, not even that which may have been offered to the gods. 15

None shall cut or mutilate any member, either of his own body or of that of another, with a weapon of any kind through anger, or in the event of misdeed, either of one's own self or of another. 16

None shall commit theft of any kind even if it were for the (ostensible) purpose of helping some charitable purpose, nor shall any one take even such things as fuel or flowers that belong to some one without his permission. 17

No followers of mine, whether men or women, shall ever commit adultery; my followers shall shun gambling and such other vices, and they shall abstain from using all intoxicating drugs and things such as hemp etc. 18

Nor shall anyone eat or drink except in Jagannathpuri from a person of a caste lower than one's own, even though such food and drink be the remnants of the offerings to Shri Krishna. 19

No false accusation shall be laid against any one for the sake of furthering one's own interests. No indecent or abusive words shall ever be uttered. 20

No one shall ever use or hear profane language against the gods, Sacred places, Brahmins, Holy women, Sadhus and Vedas. 21

None shall eat of an offering made to the goddess (Kali) to whom are offered usually flesh and liquor, and before whom animals such as goats etc. are sacrificed. 22

If any of my followers happen to pass by a temple of Shiva or any other God, he shall bow down respectfully and then enter the place to pay his respects to the image. 23

## *Sri Swami Narayana*

None shall give up the performance of the duties that are imposed upon the class or the religious order to which he belongs, nor shall he adopt the duties that are enjoined on others, nor accept a religion propounded by heretical teachers. 24

You shall not hear even the story of Lord Krishna's exploits from him whose words might lead one to fall from his faith or duty. 25

You shall not tell such truth as is productive of mischief to yourself or to others; nor shall you keep the company of ungrateful men, nor accept bribes from any person whatever. 26

You shall not associate with thieves or with wicked or vicious persons or with heretics, or with those who are in illicit love, or with those who are engaged in dishonest occupations. 27

You shall not have any connection with those who through eager desire to obtain a woman, or wealth, or some sensual gratification, practise sinful acts, under the cloak of devotion and religious knowledge. 28

You shall not pay attention to those books (even though they may be regarded as scriptures by some) in which Shri Krishna and his incarnations are artfully confuted. 29

No water or milk that is not strained should be drunk, nor should water containing minute insects be used for such purposes as bathing etc. 30

Never take any medicine which is mixed with wine or flesh meat, or which may have been prescribed by a physician of unknown standing. 31

Never allow bodily excretions or evacuations or saliva to fall in places protected by the scriptures or public custom from such nuisance. 32

Do not enter or leave a house by a side entrance (or private door), nor take up your residence at any place without its owner's permission. 33

Males shall not listen to discourses on religious knowledge from the mouths of women, nor shall they carry on discussion with women, nor with a king or his officials. 34

You shall not speak disrespectfully to religious preceptors, superiors, those respected by the people, the learned and those that bear arms. 35

Never do any act rashly, nor be slow in a religious duty. Impart to others the knowledge you receive and daily associate with men of holy living. 36

Never go empty-handed to pay a visit to a religious preceptor, or a god or a king. Never betray a trust or violate confidence. Never praise yourself with your own lips. 37

My followers shall not wear clothes in such a manner as shall expose their limbs to view. 38

The worship of Krishna must not be performed without attending to one's proper duties, nor should one give up the worship of Krishna for fear of calumny of the ignorant. 39

On occasions of religious festivals or on ordinary days, neither men nor women who go to the temples shall touch any member of the other sex. 40

Those twice-born persons that have received initiation into the worship of Krishna from a proper spiritual preceptor shall always wear on their neck a double necklace, made of Tulsi wood, and they shall make an upright mark on their forehead. This mark shall be made of Gopichandan ( white earth from Dwarka ), or with paste made of sandal and saffron left from that employed in the worship of Krishna. Within this upright mark they shall make a round mark with the same substance or the red powder left over from the offering made to Radha and Krishna. 41-43

Those pure Shudras, who are devotees of Krishna, while practising their own peculiar duties, shall, like the twice-born, wear the double necklace and make the vertical mark on the forehead. 44

The Shudras who are lower still shall always wear a double necklace like the others and shall make the round mark on their forehead while eschewing the upright mark. 45

Those twice-born of my followers, who have inherited from their forefathers the use of a necklace of Rudraksh ( the berry of a tree sacred to Shiva ) and the horizontal mark ( of Shivas ), shall not discontinue their practice. 46

Narayana and Shiva are to be considered as but one Deity, since they both have been declared by the Vedas as Brahma ( the Supreme Being ). 47

My followers shall not resort to the law enjoined to be followed in times of extreme distress when they are faced with distress which is but of a light nature. 48

Every day every one shall wake up before sunrise, and calling on the name of Krishna he shall proceed to the performance of his daily ablutions. 49

Taking his seat in a place, he shall cleanse his teeth and wash his face; he shall then bathe with pure water and shall wear two clean clothes, one round his waist and the other round his body. 50

He shall then sit on a clean and fair-sized seat placed on clean ground, and shall sip water with his face either to the east or north. 51

My male followers shall then make on the forehead the vertical mark with the round spot in it, and the married women shall make only a circular mark with red powder. A widow shall wear neither the vertical nor the round mark on her forehead. After doing these things they shall engage themselves in the mental worship of Krishna. 52-53

They shall reverently bow to the pictures of Radha and Krishna, and shall repeat the Mantra (the eight-syllabled prayer meaning "Krishna is my refuge") as often as possible. Only after they have done this, they shall engage themselves in their worldly affairs. 54

Those devotees who have, like Ambrish, dedicated themselves entirely to the Deity shall perform



their worship in the order mentioned above as well as in the one given below. These consecrated persons shall worship an image made of stone or wood or metal of the Shaligram (a black stone representing Vishnu) with offerings procurable at the time and the repetition of the Mantra. They shall then recite the Hymn of praise and adoration of Shri Krishna. Those who do not know the Hymn in Sanskrit shall chant the name of Krishna. Those who have consecrated themselves to the service of Krishna shall make an offering of food to the image and then partake of the sanctified food, and they shall serve the Lord with affection. Such votaries are considered Nirguna (passionless and sinless) and all their actions being dedicated to the Nirguna Hari are themselves Nirguna. These worshippers shall neither drink water nor eat leaves, roots or fruits or anything before offering it to Krishna. 55-60

Those of my followers who have been debilitated by old age or from some grievous calamity shall make over the image of Krishna in their possession to the charge of some other votaries, and they shall worship Him as strength permits. 61

Only those images which have been given by the Acharya or consecrated by him shall be worshipped and served, but to other images, to make obeisance is enough. 62

Every day all my followers shall go to the temple of God in the evening and there they shall sing enthusiastically the name of the Lord of Radhika. 63

The story of his life and deeds should be devoutly read and heard, and on festivals hymns in praise of Krishna should be sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. 64

In this manner my followers shall perform their religious duties daily, and they shall also study works both in Sanskrit and in the vernacular to the best of their ability. 65

Every person should be given work according to his qualifications and character, and never otherwise. 66

Let every one always provide his servants with food and clothing in proportion to their merit and his own means. 67

In conversation every person should be addressed conformably to his position and suitably to time and place, never otherwise. A preceptor, a king, an elder, an ascetic, a learned man, and he that practises austerities—all these should be well received, with due deference and ceremonies such as rising from the seat, bowing down etc. In the presence of a preceptor, of an image or a king, or in an assembly, none should sit on the ground in such a disrespectful manner as would be evidenced by the resting of a foot on a thigh or by the binding of the knees with a cloth. 68-70

Never enter into a controversial discussion with your Acharya, but reverently serve him by providing him, according to your means, with all things such as food, money and clothes. When you hear of his arrival, you should immediately go out to receive him

with proper welcome. When he departs, you should accompany him as far as the confines of the village. 71-72

No act, however rich be its fruit, shall ever be performed if it be against one's Dharma (laws of righteousness), for Dharma alone is able to confer all desired objects. No unrighteous act, even though such may have been committed in the past by great persons, shall ever be done by my followers; they shall follow these great ones only in their good deeds. 73-74

All my followers shall practise special religious observances during the rainy season; those having a weak constitution shall practise the same for the month of Shravan only. Reading and listening to the story of the exploits of Vishnu, singing hymns in His praises, solemn worship, repetition of His Mantra, recitation of the Hymn of Praise in Sanskrit, reverential circumambulations, prostrations with the eight members (of the body); these observances are considered as the best; any one of these should be practised with special devotion. 76-78

The fast of all the eleventh days (of the waxing and the waning moon) shall be devoutly observed, as also that of the birth days of Krishna and Shiva with festivities during the day. On all fast days sleeping by day shall most carefully be avoided, as by such sleep, the merit of the fast is lost just as it is by sexual intercourse. 79-80

Whatever appointed order of fasts and festivals has been enjoined by that most eminent of Vaishnavas

Shri Vitthleshjee, the son of Shri Vallabhacharya, shall be followed, and all the fasts and festivals shall be observed by my followers accordingly, and the form of worshipping Krishna shall also be adopted as directed by him. 81-82

A pilgrimage to the Tirthas (holy places) of which Dwarka is the chief, should be performed with proper rites by my followers. Love and charity should be shown towards the poor according to one's ability. 83

Vishnu, Shiva, Ganpati, Parvati, and Sun, these five deities shall be honoured with worship by my followers. 84

When at any place an annoyance from a ghost is suffered from, Narayana Kavacha or the Mantra of Hanuman should be recited, but not the mantra of any inferior God. 85

On the occasion of eclipses of the sun and moon my followers shall suspend their worldly affairs, and withdrawing within themselves they shall repeat the Mantra of Krishna. At the termination of such eclipses, they shall bathe with their clothes on, and the Grihasthas (house-holders) shall distribute alms according to their means, and those that have renounced the world shall engage themselves in the worship of Vishnu, the supreme God. 86-87

All my followers belonging to the four classes, shall observe, in conformity with the Scriptures, the rules regarding uncleanness through birth and death according to the degree of kinship. 88

The Brahmins should possess tranquillity of mind, self-restraint, forbearance, contentment and such other allied virtues: the Kshatriyas (the military class) should possess bravery, fortitude and the kindred qualities. The Vaishyas should occupy themselves in agriculture, mercantile pursuits, money-lending etc, and the Shudras should maintain themselves by serving the twice-born. 89-90

The twice-born should perform at the proper seasons and according to their means, the twelve sacraments, the six daily duties, and the Shradhdha offerings to the spirits of departed ancestors. 91

If knowingly or unknowingly any sin, great or small, were committed, the proper penance for it should be performed according to one's ability. 92

The Vedas and Sutras of Vyasa, the Bhagvat Purana, the thousand names of Vishnu (given in the Mahabharata), the Bhagwad-Gita, Vidur-Niti, Vasudeva Mahatmya from the Vishnu Khanda of Skand Purana and the Yagnavalkya Smriti—these eight good Scriptures are approved by me as authoritative Scriptures. 93-95

All my twice-born disciples who wish good to themselves should read and hear these noble Scriptures. 96

When a question in regard to usage, practice and penance is to be determined, my followers should refer to the Yagnavalkya Smriti with its commentary called the Mitakshara. 97

The Fifth and the Tenth Books of the Bhagwat Purana are to be considered as having the pre-eminence over all the Scriptures for the understanding of the glory of Krishna. 93

The Fifth and the Tenth Books of the Bhagwat Purana and the Yagnavalkya Smriti are respectively my Bhakti Shastra (Manual of Faith), Yoga Shastra (Manual of Devotion) and Dharma Shastra (Manual of Laws). 99

As a treatise on spiritual knowledge I approve the commentary on the Bhagwad-Gita and the Vyasa Sutra by Ramanujacharya. 100

Whatever precepts in these Scriptures have for their subject the excessive exaltation of Krishna, of Dharma, of Bhakti and of Vairagya, shall be regarded as taking precedence over all others. Their essential doctrine is that Devotion to Krishna should be joined with Dharma. 101-102

Dharma is the good practice which is enjoined both by the Shrutis (the Vedas) and by the Smritis (the body of Law as delivered originally by Manu and other inspired legislators), and Bhakti is that intense love for Krishna accompanied with a due sense of His glory. Vairagya is the absence of satisfaction in any object except Krishna. Jnana consists in discriminating rightly between the nature of the individual soul (Jiva), the external world (Maya) and the Supreme Being. 103-104

The individual soul dwells in the heart: it is as subtle as an atom: it is all consciousness and has the faculty of Knowledge; it is ascertained to be constantly pervading the entire body; its characteristics are invulnerability, indivisibility and the like. 105

The external world is identical with the energising power of Krishna: it is composed of the three Gunas: it is darkness: it is to be recognised as the cause of the soul having such ideas in regard to the body and the things relating to it as are conveyed by the expressions I, mine and the like. 106

He, who abides in the living personal soul in the character of an internal monitor as the soul pervades the heart, is to be considered as the self-existent Supreme Being, the rewarder of all actions. 107

That Being, known by various names such as the glorious Krishna, Para-Brahma, Bhagwan, Purushottama, the Cause of all manifestations, is our adorable Deity. 108

He, together with Radha should be regarded as the Supreme under the name of Radha Krishna. With Rukhamani He is known as Laxmi Narayana. When with Arjuna, He is known by the name of Nara Narayana, and with Balbhadr He is known as Krishna Balbhadr. 109-110

These devotees such as Radha, Rukhmani etc. are in some places represented at His side, and in others as absorbed in His body by their extreme attachment to Him. Therefore let none ever consider

that difference in forms makes any difference in the identity of the Deity. It is the same two-armed Krishna who manifests Himself by His will as four-armed or multi-armed. Him alone every human being on earth shall worship in every possible manner. Nothing else except such faith is able to procure salvation. 111-113

The best fruit of the virtues of the meritorious consists in devotion to Krishna and association with holy men: without these even a Pandit (one well-versed in Scriptural lore) will go to lower worlds. 114

Meditation should be directed towards Krishna, His incarnations and their images, but never towards living men, or to gods, or even to those who may be devotees or knowers of Brahman. 115

Realizing one's soul as Brahma and as distinct from its three bodies (gross, subtle and causal) one should worship Krishna (Para Brahma) by means of that self at all times. 116

The Tenth Book of the Bhagwat Purana should be heard with reverence, and learned men should read it daily or at least once a year. 117

The reading of this Tenth Book and of the Vishnu-Sabastra-Nama (thousand names of Vishnu) should be performed as far as possible publicly in a pure place (such as the precincts of a temple etc.) according to one's means, for such reading causes the attainment of all desired objects, 118



On the occurrence of any disaster caused by the elements or when any human calamity or sickness takes place, one should be occupied in striving to preserve himself and other people, and in nothing else. 119

Religious usages, business transactions and penance should be adapted to one's country, time, age, means, rank and ability. 120

The Philosophical Doctrine approved by me is Vishishtadwaita and the desired heavenly abode is Goloka. There to worship Krishna and to be united with Him as the Supreme Soul of the Universe is the final Beatitude according to me. 121

These that have been specified above are the general duties of my followers, both men and women. I shall enumerate the special duties in what follows. 122

The two sons of my elder and younger brothers shall never give religious instructions to any woman except their nearest relations. They shall never touch or converse with any woman in any place whatever. They shall never show any cruelty to any person, nor shall they take charge of any deposit belonging to another. They shall not stand surety for any person in worldly affairs. They might ask for alms in times of distress but they shall never contract any debt. They shall not sell corn bestowed by their followers, though they might exchange old corn for new since it is no sale. 123-126

They shall perform the worship of Ganesh on the fourth day of the bright half of Bhadrapada, and worship Hanuman on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Ashwin. 127

I have appointed these as spiritual guides to my followers to guard their spiritual interests, and they shall initiate all who desire salvation. They shall keep their disciples steadfast in their respective duties. The Sadhus shall be honoured and the holy Scriptures shall be reverently read (publicly). Worship of Laxmi Narayana and other forms of Krishna that have been set up and consecrated by me shall be performed with proper ceremonies. Any one who may come to the temple of Krishna to ask for a gift of food shall be received with respect and food be given to him according to ability. Having established a school for giving instruction, a learned Brahmin should be employed over it. True knowledge should be promoted throughout the world, for that is an act of great merit. 128-132

The wives of these with the permission of their respective husbands shall initiate women in the Mantra of Krishna. They shall never touch or speak to males other than their nearest relations, nor shall they show their faces to them. 133-134

My male followers who are Grihasthas (house-holders) shall never touch widows unless they are their close relations. They shall not remain alone in any private place with a youthful mother, sister or daughter except in a time of distress, nor shall a wife

be given away ( to another man ). They shall not come too close in any way to a woman who in any transactions has been brought in connection with the king of the country. When a guest has arrived at a house, he shall be honoured and served with food and other things according to one's ability. My followers shall make offerings to gods and to the spirits of the departed ancestors in the proper manner according to their ability. It is the duty of my disciples, as long as they live and according to their ability, to honour with faithful attention their father, mother, spiritual preceptor and the diseased. Every person shall, according to his ability, carry on some occupation suitable to his caste or religious order. Those that live by agriculture shall not castrate a bull. According to circumstances and time provisions and money shall be laid by, and those that keep cattle shall store up fodder enough for their need. One should keep cow and other animals only when he is sure that he can himself attend to their proper treatment and give them enough fodder and water, and never otherwise. Dealings in land and money shall never be transacted with even a son or a friend without a deed signed by witnesses. If there is any money to be given or received in the matter of a betrothal, it should be done by a written document attested by proper witnesses, and never by a verbal agreement. One's expenditure shall always be in strict proportion to his income. Every day one should take note of one's income and expenditure in the ordinary affairs of life, and note them down with one's own

hand. My followers shall assign a tithe of the grain, money etc., acquired by their occupation or exertions to Krishna, and the poor should give a twentieth part. The due performance of fasts of which the Eleventh days are the principal shall be affected according to the Scriptures and one's means, for this will lead to the attainment of the desired objects. Every year in the month of Shravan, my followers shall perform or get others to perform cheerfully the worship of Shiva with Bili leaves and the like. They shall borrow neither money nor ornaments nor clothes nor utensils for use on festive occasions from the Acharyas or the Mandirs. While going to do homage to great Krishna or an Acharya or any Sadhu, these followers of mine shall not accept ( gratis ) food from others on the road or in these places ( of destination ), for thereby they would be deprived of their religious merit. They shall pay the full amount of wages agreed upon to workmen, and no one shall ever keep secret the payment of a debt. No one shall have any dealings with wicked men. If through great distress caused by a famine or by enemies or by ( the oppression of ) a king any danger of destruction ariseth to character, wealth or life, the wise among my followers shall at once quit even their own native country, and emigrate to another and live there happily. 135-154

Wealthy householders should perform those sacrifices in honour of Vishnu which require no killing of animals. Brahmins and Sadhus should be fed on festival days at sacred places of pilgrimage. They should cele-

brate the great festivals of God in the temples and should distribute gifts of various kinds among deserving Brahmins. 155-156

Kings who are my followers shall govern all their subjects in accordance with the Law (laid down in the Dharma Shastras), and shall protect them as if they were their children, and they shall establish the observance of proper duties throughout the whole land. They shall be well acquainted with the circumstances relating to their kingdom, viz., the seven Angas, the four Upayas and the six Gunas, and the places of resort to which spies should be sent. They shall also make themselves acquainted with men who are skilled in legal procedure and with the court functionaries observing by the right signs whether any ought to be punished or not. 157-158

Wives shall honour their husbands as if they were gods and never offend them with improper language though they be diseased, indigent or impotent. They shall not hold any communication, though the occasion for it may arise unsought, with any other men, who may be possessed of beauty, youth and other accomplishments. A chaste woman does not allow her navel, thighs or breasts to be seen by males; she does not remain without her upper garment; she does not look at (the antics of) buffoons, nor associate with immodest women. A wife whose husband is away in a foreign land shall wear neither ornaments nor fine clothes; nor shall she frequent other people's houses nor laugh nor jest with other women. 159-162

Widows shall serve the Lord Krishna with minds intent on Him as their only husband, and they shall live under the control of their father or other male members of their family, and never in independence. They shall never touch at any time any men except their nearest relations, and when young they shall never without necessity engage in conversation with young men. If any infant male child touch them no blame attaches to them any more than from contact with a dumb animal, nor if they are compelled from necessity to talk with or touch an old man. They shall never receive instructions of any kind from any men except their nearest relations, and they shall often mortify their flesh by vows and fasts. They shall never give away to others the money required for their own support and they may give away only that which is in excess. They shall eat only one meal a day and shall sleep on the ground. They shall never look at animals engaged in sexual act. Widows shall never dress like married women, nor like a female ascetic, nor like a mendicant nor in any unbecoming attire. They shall neither associate with nor touch a woman who has been guilty of procuring abortion nor shall they converse about or hear anything on the subject of the loves of the male sex. Except in time of distress widows who are young shall never remain alone in secret places along with men even though they be their relatives, if youthful. They shall never join in the frolics practised at the Holi festival, nor shall they put on ornaments or finely woven clothes composed of cotton or metal threads. 163-172

Neither wives nor widows shall ever bathe without wearing clothes: no woman shall ever conceal the first appearance of her monthly periods. A woman in that season shall not touch for three days any human being, clothes, etc: nor ought she to do so till she has bathed on the fourth day. 173-174

Those of my followers who are Naishtik Brahmanas (the Brahmans who have taken a vow of celibacy) shall not knowingly either touch or converse with or look at a woman. They shall never talk or hear others talk of women, and they shall not perform their ablutions or other religious rites at places frequented by women. They shall not knowingly touch or look at even the pictures or wooden images of women unless they be the representations of goddesses. They shall neither draw any likeness of a woman nor touch her clothes. They shall never knowingly look even at animals engaged in sexual act. They shall neither touch nor look at a male in the disguise of a woman, nor shall they sing the praises of God with a view to being heard by women. They shall pay no attention to the command of even their spiritual preceptor if it be likely to lead them to a breach of their vow of chastity. They shall continue steadfast, contented and humble-minded. When a woman insists on forcing herself near them, they shall immediately try to keep her off by expostulating with her, and ( if she still approaches closer ) by reproaching her. In cases where their own lives or those of women are in jeopardy they can protect themselves or the women by touching or talking

with them. They shall not anoint their bodies with oil. They shall not carry weapons. They shall not dress themselves in unbecoming costume. They shall subdue the sense of taste. If in the house of any Brahmin the meals are cooked and served up by a woman, they shall not go there to ask for food, but shall ask for it at some other house. They shall study the Vedas and Scriptures and serve their spiritual teachers. They shall avoid the society of males who look like women as they would avoid the society of women. 175-185

He who is by birth a Brahmin shall on no account drink water from a leathern vessel: nor shall he eat garlic, onions etc. Nor shall he eat food without performing his ablutions, the Sandhya service, repetition of the Gayatri, the worship of Vishnu and the Vaishwadeva ceremony. 186-187

All who are Sadhus are bound, just like the Brahmcharis, to avoid associating with women, or men who are fond of men, and they shall subdue their internal enemies (lust, anger, avarice, infatuation, pride and envy). They shall subjugate all the senses, especially the sense of taste. They shall neither lay by money themselves nor make others do so for them. They shall not take charge of any one's deposit. They shall never relax their patient disposition, nor allow a woman to enter their abodes at any time. Except at a time of distress they shall never go out at night singly, nor shall they travel to any place without a companion. They shall not use a costly variegated cloth or one dyed scarlet in colour or dyed



in any other way or any expensive cloth, though freely presented to them by another. They shall not go to the houses of householders unless for the purpose of asking for alms or for being present at an assembly. They shall not spend time uselessly without devoting any of it to the worship of the Deity. To the abode of householders in which only males are employed for serving up the food and where no woman is to be seen, my Sadhus may resort for participation in a meal: otherwise they should ask for uncooked food and prepare the meal themselves. My Paramhansas shall live in the manner of Bharat, the son of Rishabhadeva, who lived in former times on earth as if dead to the flesh and the world. 188-196

Brahmcharis and Sadhus shall diligently abstain from the use of such things as betel-leaves, tobacco, opium etc. They shall never accept a meal given on the performance of such ceremonies as that of conception or of the Shradhdha on the eleventh or twelfth day of a man's death. They shall never sleep during the day unless afflicted with sickness etc: nor shall they indulge in any worldly talk among themselves or hear it intentionally from others. They shall not use a bedstead for sleeping except when suffering from illness or other affliction. They shall be guileless and straightforward in their behaviour towards other Sadhus. They shall patiently hear abusive language or even blows from evil-minded persons, and shall wish only good to them (in return). They shall not undertake the work of a go-between or an informer

or a spy. They shall purge themselves of all their selfishness and have no partiality for their relations. 197-202

Thus I have specified in a summary manner the duties of all. Those who require more particular instructions should refer to the sacred books handed down by tradition. 203

Having myself extracted the essence of all the sacred Scriptures I have written this Directory which leads men to the attainment of desired objects. 204

Hence it is incumbent on my followers, having their mind well controlled, to conduct themselves in conformity with its precepts, and not according to their own wills. 205

Those men and women who will act according to these directions shall certainly obtain the four great objects of human desire (viz., Dharma or righteousness, Artha or wealth, Kama or pleasure and Moksha or final beatitude). 206

Those who will not act according to these directions shall be considered by my followers, both men and women, as excluded from my Fellowship. 207

My followers shall daily read this book of directions, and those who do not know how to read shall listen to others reading it. 208

But in the absence of a reader, worship should be paid to it every day and it should be honoured with the greatest reverence as my word and my representative. 209

This Book of Precepts should be given only to those persons who are endowed with a spiritual mind, but never to a man possessed of a carnal mind. 210

This Book of Precepts bringing welfare ( to all who would follow it ) was completed on the first day of the spring season, i. e. on the fifth day of the month of Magha known as Vasanta Panchami in the year Samvat 1882. 211

May Krishna, the destroyer of the miseries of mankind, the protector of devotion accompanied with performance of proper duties, and the bestower of all desired happiness to His devotees, grant us blessings of all kinds ! 212



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